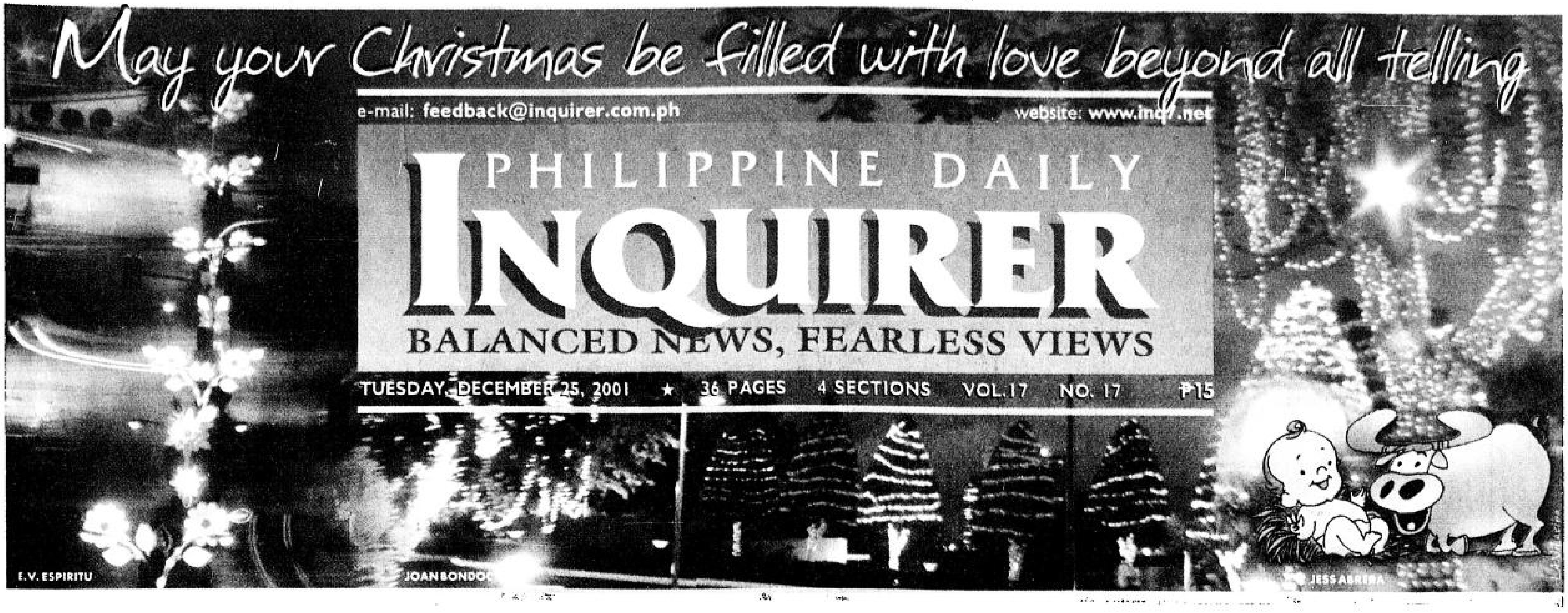

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2001 ★ 36 PAGES 4 SECTIONS VOL.17 NO. 17 P15

E.V. ESPIRITU JOAN BONDOC JESS ABRERA

2 kidnap gangs busted

10 suspects bagged, woman victim rescued in police raids

Pope asks bandits in RP: Free captives

VATICAN CITY—Invoking the spirit of Christmas, Pope John Paul II prayed Sunday that kidnappers be moved by pity to release their hostages and said he was thinking especially of those abducted because of their faith, including a priest held for two months now in the Philippines.

"I want to make an appeal on behalf of those persons who are held hostage," John Paul said during his traditional Sunday appearance at noon from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square.

"My thoughts go especially out to all those who have been abducted because of their faith, in particular Fr. Giuseppe Pierantoni," the Pope said.

Pierantoni, a native of Bologna, Italy, was kidnapped on Oct. 17 shortly after celebrating Mass in the coastal town of Dimataling, Zamboanga del Sur in the southern Philippines. The victim serves as the assistant parish priest of Dimataling.

Members of the Abu Sayyaf have also been holding an American missionary couple, Martin and Gracia Burnham, together with a Filipina nurse, in the dense jungle of Basilan Island in the southern Philippines. The Burnhams were seized on May 27 from a high-end resort in nearby Palawan.

"May the holy Christmas, a mystery of goodness and peace, move

POPE/A13

Christmas sad, grim in Jesus' birthplace

BETHLEHEM, West Bank—In the deserted streets of Bethlehem, once a favorite Christmas destination for tourists and pilgrims, residents are preparing for another gloomy holiday amid strict Israeli closures, with memories of a bloody reoccupation still fresh in their minds.

"It's sad and grim, it's not normal," said Bethlehem Mayor Hanna Nasser, blaming the bleak situation on the Israeli lockdown of the Palestinian territories, the lack of tourists and the collapsed local economy.

The town had already been through all of this last year, although then the Palestinian intifada, or uprising, against Israel was only three months old.

Now after 15 months, the situation is even worse, especially after a 10-day Israel invasion in October that left its mark on the town.

That extended stay by Israeli tanks and troops searching for extremists linked to the killing of a minister cost the lives of 20 Palestinians, the destruction of shops and businesses and the loss of an estimated $10 million in damages to the local economy, the mayor said.

Now the photographs of the "martyrs" adorn shop windows full of unsold souvenirs aimed at tourists who never came: cradles in fake pearl finish, statues of Christ in olive wood and reproductions of Jesus' crown of thorns.

The owner of one of the main shops on Manger Square—opposite the Church of the Nativity, tra-

CHRISTMAS/A13

AND A CHILD SHALL LEAD US, the Scriptures promise, and this baby reaching out for a "parol," the uniquely Filipino interpretation of the Star of Bethlehem, is one more reminder of that pledge.

JOAN BONDOC

By TJ Burgonio

POLICE arrested 10 suspected members of two kidnap-for-ransom gangs and rescued one victim over the weekend, the country's anti-kidnap czar announced yesterday.

PNP Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane said the police action "neutralized" two criminal groups operating in Metro Manila, one of which was responsible for at least three high-profile kidnappings earlier this year.

A suspect and one policeman were wounded in the operation, Ebdane added.

One gang, called the Iloilo-Bisaya Solid Group, seized grocery store owner Mae Ling Ang on Dec. 20 in Malabon town, and then kept her in a 20-foot container van in Quezon City.

Members of a crack team raided the van on Saturday, arrested seven men aged 21 to 50, and rescued the victim, said Ebdane, head of the National Anti-Crime Commission Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktaf).

Also on Saturday, policemen arrested three members of another kidnap gang in an entrapment operation in Laguna province.

The second gang, which Ebdane called the Villaver group after its alleged leader, seized shipping businessman Victor Castañeda on Friday and arranged for his family to pay a P10-million ransom the following day.

Castañeda was freed in Alaminos, Laguna, but the gang members were arrested.

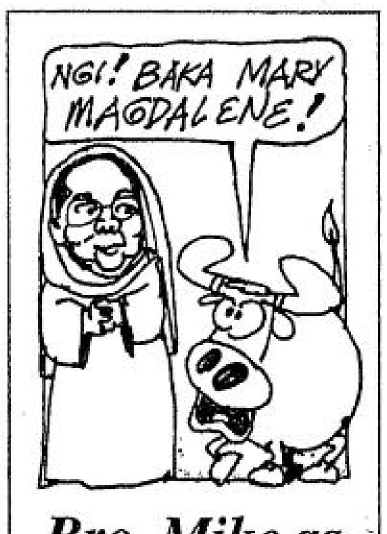
The suspects were presented to a visibly pleased President Macapagal-Arroyo in Camp Crame yesterday.

"I just want to congratulate everybody who did this very good job to thank them, on behalf of the Filipino people. This is a very important breakthrough," Ms Macapagal said at a press briefing.

"What have been involved in this arrest were some of the most celebrated, headline-grabbing cases that we've had this year. With the cracking of these syndicates, I think we have made a very major breakthrough in the fight against kidnap for ransom," she added.

Ebdane said the Villaver group was involved in the kidnapping of five other victims this year, including Romeo Panganiban, Mary Grace Cheng Rosagas (the daughter of Uratex owner Robert Cheng), Connie Wong (Robert Cheng's sister, who was later found dead), Michele Dee Santos (a granddaughter of taipan and diplomat Alfonso Yuchengco) and Michael Ng.

2 KIDNAP/A12


NGI! BAKA MARY MAGDALENE!

Bro. Mike as Virgin Mary? Gloria chided

By Gerald G. Lacuarta

EL SHADDAI founder Bro. Mike Velarde as the Blessed Virgin Mary? The President's less-than-immaculate comparison made early on Sunday was torn apart by a militant group yesterday.

"Where in heaven's name did President

BRO.MIKE/A13

NY mayor Time's Person of the Year

NEW YORK—Brash, outspoken, indefatigable Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, whose composure and compassion rallied New York and the entire United States after the Sept. 11 attacks, was named Time Magazine's Person of the Year.

"This was about Sept. 11 and about how in the immediate aftermath of the attacks in those crucial hours, one person took emotional charge in a way that was extraordinary," Time managing editor Jim Kelly told Reuters.

"He led by emotion, not just by words and actions, and in an emotional year like this one, he deserved to be person of the year," Kelly said.

Giuliani, who is in the final days of his eight years as mayor of America's largest city, is Time Magazine's 76th Person of the Year.

Giuliani, 57, said he was honored to receive the award, adding that it reflected the efforts of all New Yorkers, including the firefighters, police and emergency workers who helped see the city through an attack that killed thousands of people and destroyed the World Trade Center's twin towers.

"I was very humbled and very moved by the selection by Time Magazine," Giuliani said. "I believe that I wasn't selected. I believe the people of New York were selected as the people of the year."

"I got all the credit resting on the shoulders of these people that have had one of the most heroic three months I think any people have ever had," he said.

Time editors spent hours debating whether to name Osama bin Laden, the prime suspect in the terror assault, as person of the year.

But Bin Laden "is too small a man to get the credit for all that has happened in America in the autumn of 2001," Time said. "It is what came after his men had finished their job that has come to define this year."

"He's a moral pipsqueak," Kelly said.

Kelly explained that after viewing the videotape released last week showing Bin Laden pleased that the Sept. 11 attacks succeeded beyond his expectations, Time decided that the Saudi-born dissident lacked a broad "historical sweep."

"We are dealing here with, yes, an evil man, but not a man who de-

NY MAYOR/A13

Heart baby doing well after surgery

By Donna S. Cueto

GIGGLING, Darelle "Dajed" Montojo is dancing to the soundtrack of "Moulin Rouge" as her mother Jennifer claps her hands in tune to the beat.

Who would think that this lively and cheerful 2-year-old underwent surgery lasting seven-and-a-half hours only three months ago?

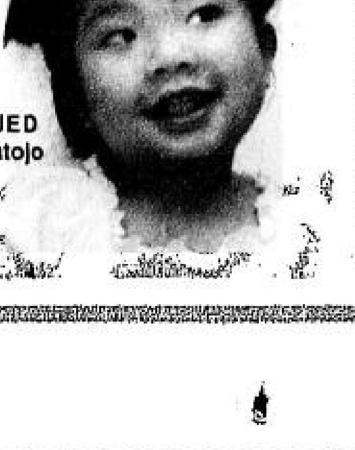
Emerging from the operating room of the Montefiore Medical Center in New York last Sept. 27, Dajed had tubes sticking out of her chest to drain the blood in her lungs and heart, a urine catheter, and other tubes in her neck, foot, hand and groin. A blue respirator—the same color as the two cotton bands that clasped her pigtails—was helping her breathe. Thick white bandages draped her body, covering the five-inch wound across her chest.

The surgery was performed for the purpose of putting a valve homograft—available only in the United States—inside Dajed's chest. It was the best option for her to survive, this child who had no main pulmonary valve.

But Dajed is a miracle. Now, during the visit of the INQUIRER at her family's home in Quezon City, she is smiling while posing for the camera.

Born with a rare heart ailment called tetralogy of fallot with pulmonary valve atresia, Dajed is the first

HEART/A12



DAJED Montojo

Mawanay won't leave safe house

By Christine Herrera and Michael Lim Ubac

THE CONTROVERSIAL witness against Sen. Panfilo Lacson Jr. will not be junked for now, allegedly on Malacañang's orders.

Angelo "Ador" Mawanay yesterday told the INQUIRER that he would stay put in the "safe house" assigned to him by the Department of Justice while the "issues" between him and the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) were being "sorted out."

Mawanay said an order for his termination as a witness under the DOJ's Witness Protection Program (WPP) was served to him Wednesday.

"But there were no specifics contained in the DOJ order so I refused to receive and sign it," he said in a phone interview.

The only reason given to him, he said, was that he had "committed a crime." There was no elaboration.

Mawanay said he was preparing to leave the safe house on Friday,

MAWANAY/A12

Second FRONT PAGE

Misuari rebs attack, wound 12 Marines

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Twelve Marines were wounded Monday in an ambush by armed followers of jailed Muslim leader Nur Misuari in Jolo yesterday, the military said.

The troops, belonging to the Marine Battalion Landing Team were travelling in a military truck to buy provisions when gunmen from the Misuari's Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) faction attacked them on a highway in Tandu Batu Village, the military said.

Twelve soldiers were wounded in the fighting while an undetermined number of MNLF guerrillas were also believed wounded or killed, military southern command spokesperson Lt. Col. Danilo Servando said.

Ten of the soldiers suffered shrapnel wounds from a rocket-propelled grenade fired by the rebels while two others sustained gunshot wounds, he added.

"The truck driver who was unharmed managed to continue driving toward the market site in Tandu Batu," Servando said, adding that the wounded were later brought to a military hospital.

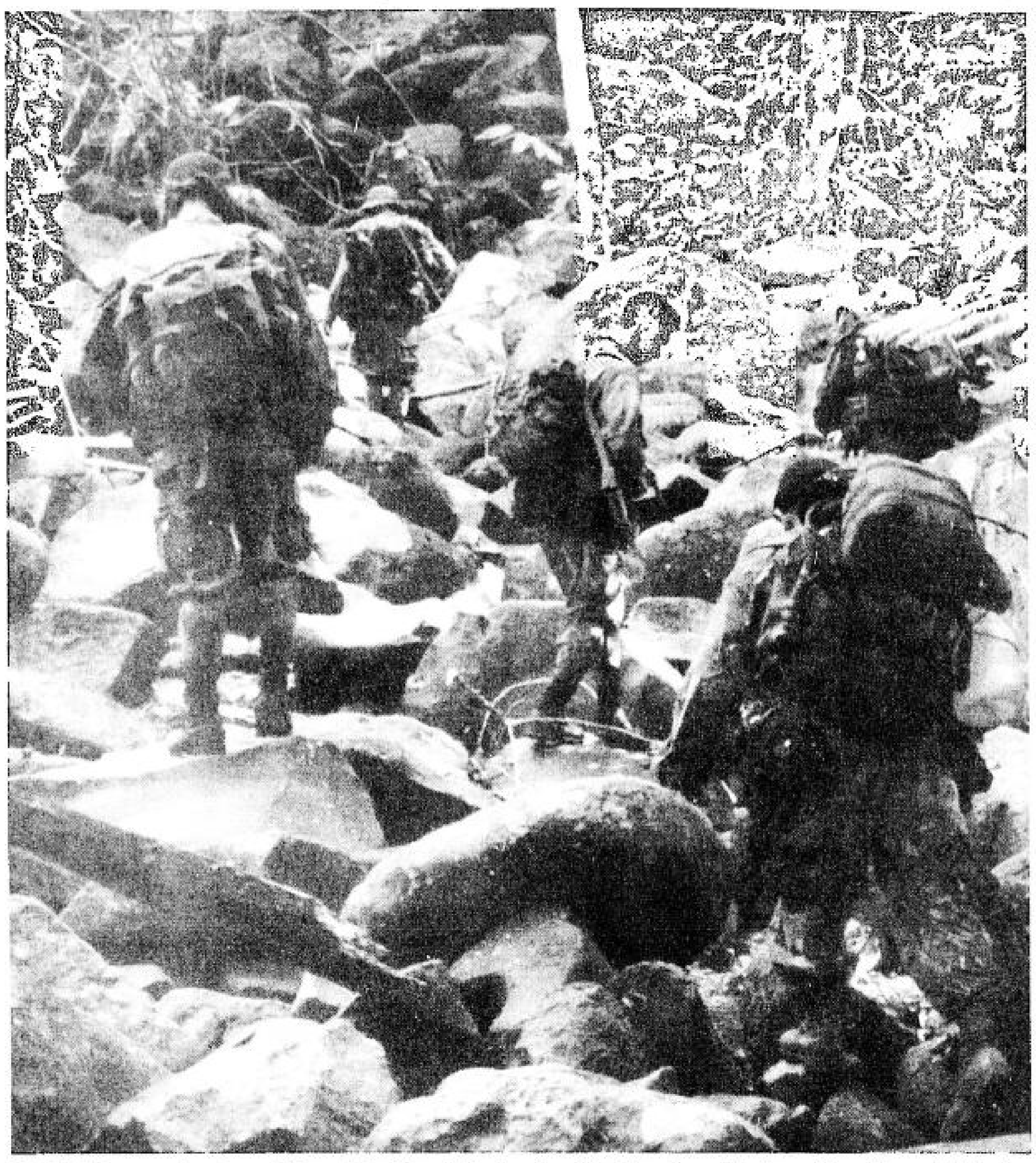
Misuari has been detained in Malaysia after fleeing a failed revolt that left scores of people dead in Jolo and the nearby city of Zamboanga last month.

Officials said Misuari instigated the rebellion after President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo backed a rival MNLF candidate to replace him as governor of a Muslim self-rule area in the south he has governed since his group signed a peace treaty with Manila in 1996.

His supporters last month attacked government targets in Jolo and seized more than 100 hostages in Zamboanga City they swapped for a safe passage to a remote MNLF camp outside the city.

Malaysia had earlier warned it would deport Misuari to a third country if the Philippines failed to bring him back before Christmas. President Macapagal last week also junked an appeal from the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) for a third country asylum for Misuari.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad on Monday said his government may allow Misuari's family to visit him in detention at a still undisclosed place. *AFP*



SCOUT Rangers gingerly walk through boulders in the jungles of Basilan where Abu Sayyaf bandits are holding two Americans and a Filipina hostage. They are trying to rescue the hostages before Christmas but appeared unlikely to meet their deadline.

CHARLIE SACEDA

General urges scrapping of US military doctrines

ACTING military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Emmanuel Teodosio yesterday said that the American experts have discovered that Filipino troops are using US military doctrines in its operations.

This, Teodosio was what probably prompted President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to call for a reevaluation of military doctrines during her speech during the 66th anniversary rites for the Armed Forces of the Philippines last week.

This January, the acting spokesperson said, a conference would be held to "Filipinize" and "localize" these doctrines.

"What the President wants is to Filipinize it...update it," Teodosio said in Filipino.

"We have a doctrine in the Armed Forces but it's not totally codified, classified in a standard format," he explained.

The remarks came during a short briefing yesterday where he announced that Brig. Gen. Edilberto Adan had gone on a Christmas leave.

Teodosio is the deputy chief of staff for education and training.

Among those who would be invited to join in the reevaluation of military doctrines would be representatives from the different military training centers.

Changes

Waging war, the general said, should always have a "dynamic" approach, adding that doctrines formulated during World War II or the campaign against the communists would not be effective in the ongoing campaigns against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front or the Moro National Liberation Front and the Abu Sayyaf.

Some of the changes he expects would come in areas of operations.

As an example, he cited the Special Operations Team doctrine saying that this may be effective in Luzon and the Visayas against the communist-inspired insurgents.

"But if you are going to transport it to Muslim Mindanao, it may not be totally effective. You must tailor or probably design or craft a different SOT concept to suit, to address a particular milieu where our troops will operate," he said.

He said that one cannot expect a Muslim community to give the same community support for the communists.

"There are also religious underpinnings," he said, adding that he would expect a group of Ilocano bandits hiding in Muslim Mindanao to be easily neutralized because of the religious, cultural underpinnings.

American influence

"I had an idea on how this thing came about. A US assessment team (went to) different areas. Probably they were surprised when they saw that the doctrines being used as SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) were familiarly similar to what they have in the United States," he said about Ms Macapagal's directive.

"So they got the wrong notion that we copied in toto or verbatim the American doctrines. Not necessarily so. It was probably similar because it was universal—how to go on patrol, how to prevent the enemy from interfering with your operations—these are all universal...The Americans cannot claim that these are uniquely American," he said.

Teodosio said that one factor for this was that most of Filipino officers studied in the United States.

Another factor was that the Filipino Armed Forces was molded by the Americans when they recognized our independence after World War II.

How to formulate doctrines

Teodosio described doctrines as the "synthesis" of the lessons learned that the military had accumulated.

One of the best formulators of doctrines, he said, were the British who gathered military and civilian experts to come up with their "threat analysis."

"The British are good here, they bring in local leaders, ministers, to determine root cause. (Then) they'll design a master philosophy on how to defeat that particular threat, then develop a doctrine on how to go about this...this would be followed by the development of weapons systems for the problem," he said.

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News that makes a difference

ABENINA

Abenina says he's done with gov't work

BY AGNES E. DONATO AND TJ BURGONIO

OUTGOING Land Transportation Office chief Edgardo Abenina yesterday reiterated that he was done with government service, following an offer from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of a board seat in the Philippine National Oil Corp.

Abenina refused to categorically say what he thought of the President's offer. "I'll just keep quiet about my situation right now," he told the INQUIRER in a phone interview. "I have made my position very clear: I am resigning from government."

Abenina has kept mum since the announcement of his resignation from the Land Transportation Office on Friday.

Supt. Hermogenes Tosino, LTO chief for media affairs, earlier said that Abenina "did not want any more part in the corrupt government."

The President spoke of the offer to Abenina during yesterday's presentation of kidnap suspects at the Philippine National Police headquarters in Camp Crame.

She also said she had sought the opinion of Alfredo Benipayo, chair of the Commission on Elections, on whether former PNP chief Roberto Lastimoso could assume Abenina's post at the LTO without violating the poll body's rules.

Lastimoso was a party-list nominee in the May 14 national elections.

"We're getting a final ruling from the Comelec chair himself," the President said. "At the level of the legal offices of the Comelec, there are two conflicting opinions. If we don't get any opinion from the Comelec chair, then we will rule (on the issue)."

Malacañang has claimed that Abenina's resignation had to do with his having reached the compulsory retirement age of 66. But speculations are rife that he was forced out because of his alleged involvement in anomalies at the LTO.

KL on Nur: Family visit, yes; asylum, no

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysia may allow the family of detained Muslim rebel leader Nur Misuari to visit him but has ruled out any chance of granting him asylum.

"We will consider," Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad was quoted as saying by the official Bernama news agency when asked whether Malaysia would allow Misuari's family to visit him.

A Misuari associate had said the family of the 60-year-old rebel leader had expressed concern over his safety as Malaysian authorities have denied any access.

"The family wants to see him. They fear for the worst since Malaysian authorities have refused to allow any visits," Elly Pamatong, a US-based lawyer who claims to represent Misuari said Sunday.

Pamatong told AFP Monday that the decision to allow Misuari's family to visit him was very much welcomed, adding that he too hoped to meet him.

The lawyer again pressed for an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) to be held in Kuala Lumpur.

"Now Misuari is being condemned even before any trial has been carried out. All I ask is for all 57 members of the OIC to be consulted before he is sent to his death in the Philippines," he told AFP.

Mahathir was also quoted as saying Monday that Misuari would not be granted temporary asylum.

"We cannot entertain asylum seekers. We have given an undertaking that people who carry out terror attacks in their own country and take ordinary people as hostages cannot be given asylum," he said, adding the date for Misuari's deportation had yet to be decided.

"We hope that the Philippine government will accept him very soon because we cannot keep him under detention forever," he was quoted as saying.

Malaysia has repeatedly said it wants to deport the detained Muslim leader as soon as possible, partly because it does not want to be tainted with any connection to what could be seen as Islamic terrorism.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Friday rejected an appeal from the OIC for Misuari to be given sanctuary in a third country and instead vowed to put him on trial for rebellion.

The foreign ministers of Indonesia and Malaysia had traveled to the Philippines to discuss the Misuari case with Philippine authorities. While it was agreed that Malaysia would send the fugitive back to the Philippines, Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda conveyed the interest of the OIC to have Misuari sent to a third country.

Misuari's followers launched an uprising in Jolo last month in a futile attempt to derail elections that ended his 5-year hold on the governorship of a Muslim self-rule region.

Misuari fled after the short-lived rebellion and was arrested Nov. 24 with six followers off an island in Malaysia's Sabah state on Borneo island.

Malaysia provided sanctuary to Misuari's separatist group, the Moro National Liberation Front in the 1970s and '80s.

Malaysia initially said it would deport Misuari by Monday, after a standard 30 days detention for illegal entry, but Mahathir said he now expects the Philippines to be ready to receive him next month.

Indonesia and Malaysia are two of the eight OIC nations which helped mediate a peace deal between the and Misuari's MNLF in 1996.

Under the 1996 accord, Misuari agreed to give up the fight for an independent Muslim state in exchange for regional autonomy. He was appointed elected governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and many members of the MNLF were taken into the army and the police.

Misuari reneged on the deal when the government rejected his proposal to postpone once more the elections for his post in November. *AFP/Reuters*

6 Pinoys to be tried for Kuwait slay

KUWAIT CITY—A Kuwaiti court has set Jan. 22 for the trial of six Filipinos accused of murdering Canadian Luc Ethier here in October, newspapers reported Sunday.

Kuwait's interior ministry has named Filipino Teddy Tomaro as the ringleader and said the group had planned to share Ethier's life insurance money.

Tomaro will be tried for premeditated murder, the papers said. The others, including Ethier's Filipino wife, Mary-Jane Bitos, are accused of being accomplices in the murder.

A seventh Filipino arrested in connection with the case has been released.

The suspects' Kuwaiti lawyer Ahmad Qurban told al-Rai al-Aam daily he will ask the emirate's Criminal Court to release them on bail.

Ethier was fatally shot on Oct. 10 as he walked with his wife through a busy shopping area south of Kuwait City. Bitos was also shot three times during the attack and insists she was forced to confess under duress.

Soon after the murder, Majid al-Mutairi, a Kuwaiti Islamist, was held as a suspect but released immediately after the Filipinos were arrested. *AFP*

MESSAGES

Pagbati at panalangin

SA NGALAN ng aking pamilya, ako ay bumabati sa inyo ng isang Maligayang Pasko. Sa panahong ito, tayo ay nakikiisa sa buong sambayanang Kristiyano sa pagsalubong ng buong puso sa pagsilang ng sanggol na si Hesus.

Sa pagkakataon na ito, tayo'y magpasalamat sa lahat ng mga biyaya na ating natanggap lalung-lalo na sa pagsubok kay Kristo na siyang nagligtas sa atin, sa gayon ang araw ng Kapaskuhan ay dapat puno ng kasiyahan, pagbibigayan at pagmamahalan. Ibahagi natin ang ganitong uri ng Pasko sa lahat ng tao. Sa ating mga mahal sa buhay at lalung-lalo na sa mga kababayan nating nangangailangan.

Ipanalangin din natin na bigyan tayo ng ating Mahal na Panginoon ng panibagong lakas upang malampasan ang mga hamon na ating hinaharap bilang isang bansa. Sama-sama tayong magtulungan upang makamtan ang isang daigdig na puno ng pagasa, kapayapaan, at puno ng pag-ibig at malayo sa walang katiyakan, karahasan, kahirapan at kadahupan. Pagtibayin natin ang ating pakikipagsapalaran upang mabigyan ng mabuti at masaganang kabuhayan ang ating mga mamamayan.

Binabati ko kayo ng Maligayang Pasko na puno ng pag-ibig at biyaya sa patnubay ng ating Panginoon. Matutunghayan ng sambayanang Pilipino ang mas maunlad at masiglang kinabukasan. Muli, Maligayang Pasko sa inyong lahat.

GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President
Republic of the Philippines

Let us be peacemakers

CHRISTMAS is indeed the most wonderful time of year when we are filled with joy. It is a time when we learn to share and care, to love and rejoice, and to give and receive. But more importantly, Christmas is about God's greatest gift to us—Jesus our Lord! God, moved by the depths of His own goodness, came to make His home with us. He has come to dwell in our hearts. Jesus is the true miracle of Christmas!

At a time when peace is threatened at all sides, it is good for us to be reminded that Jesus is our peace. He came that we may have peace in our hearts. But this peace is not something we can get for ourselves. Christ's peace is grace—freely given and freely received. God's peace is not the fruit of war and violence. God's peace is not just the absence of conflict. His peace is the fruit of love and reconciliation, of humility and forgiveness, of communion and solidarity.

And so as we celebrate Christmas, let us be instruments of Christ's peace. Let us be peacemakers. Let us build bridges not walls. Let us spread love not hatred, hope not despair, light not darkness. Like the Blessed Mother, let us bring Jesus to the world!

In this spirit, please accept my good wishes and the good wishes of all the clergy of the Archdiocese of Manila, for a blessed Christmas, and a peaceful New Year. And may Mary, our mother, continue to lead us to Jesus and guide our feet into the way of peace.

Peace be with you!

JAIME CARDINAL SIN
Archbishop of Manila

'Bangkang papel' boys now have better chance

By Carlito Pablo

WHATEVER happened to Jason, Jomar and Erwin?

These were the boys from the Payatas dumpsite in Quezon City who supposedly wrote their wishes on paper boats which they floated along the Pasig River towards Malacañang and themselves were presented by President Macapagal-Arroyo in her first state-of-the-nation address.

An official Palace statement said the "Bangkang Papel" boys now have a fighting chance for a better life as their parents and guardians have started livelihood projects from the P10,000 assistance given to each by the government.

The grandmother and guardian of 10-year-old Jason Banogan, Lola Anacleta, is operating a car accessory business.

The parents of nine-year-old Erwin Dolera, Mang Ernesto and Aling Dalmacia, used the money to expand their piggery business by building a fence structure and acquiring more piglets.

The father of 10-year-old Jomar Pabalan, Mang Dionisio, is operating his own gas stove sale and repair business as well selling assembled gas stoves.

It was Jomar who wrote President Macapagal about his wish for his father to have a permanent job.

Jason prayed that he be able to finish college while Erwin asked for a home for his family.

Jason and Erwin are currently enrolled at the St. Vincent's Rolling School while Jomar is at the Kasiglahan Elementary School.

In her state of the nation address before the joint session of Congress on July 23, Ms Macapagal said the three boys represent the aspirations of ordinary Filipinos who only wish to escape from the clutches of poverty.

"Let us be united so that all children-including their parents-will have a new life and new hope for the future," the President said in her address.

Malacañang also announced that not only the three children and their families, but also other families, which were affected by the July 10, 2000 collapse of the Payatas dumpsite, are being helped by the government.

"A total of P1.2 million has been released to people's organizations Samahang Tunay ng Phase II Lupang Pangako, Samahang Magkakapitbahay ng Payatas and July 10 Payatas Victims Cooperatives to support the operations of a credit cooperative, community center for waste shop management and waste recycling center," the Palace said.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development is the lead agency undertaking the provision of socioeconomic, livelihood support and housing assistance to the direct victims of the dumpsite collapse.

These beneficiaries are those whose relatives died or were injured, or whose properties were destroyed in the tragedy.

Malacañang said the land and housing-related problems of the Payatas residents are being worked out in coordination with the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor, National Housing Authority and the local governments of Rizal and Quezon City.

According to the DSWD, it has identified 390 student-beneficiaries in Payatas, composed of elementary, high school and college students, who are now receiving P10,000 each per year from the President's Social Fund.

Gloria's Christmas wish for Mike: Give him a break

By Carlito Pablo

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo and her family will celebrate Christmas the traditional Filipino way: Misa de Aguinaldo (Christmas Mass) and a simple *noche buena* afterwards.

They were scheduled to attend the midnight Mass at the Manila Cathedral in Intramuros last night and share *noche buena* at their old house in La Vista Subdivision, Quezon City.

The President has a special wish for her husband, First Gentleman Mike Arroyo—that he be given a respite from the attacks made by her critics.

Arroyo had been the center of controversies since Ms Macapagal rose to power in January, including the telecommunication scandal wherein he was alleged to have taken a bribe in exchange for the recall of the presidential veto of a telecommunications franchise.

The alleged bribe giver later cleared the First Gentleman although he accused the President herself of demanding a controlling stock of the telecommunications company.

Ms Macapagal had said her critics were trying to destroy her through her husband.

But all of this will take the backseat when the First Family celebrates Christmas today.

Ms Macapagal said the cook, who has been attending to the needs of her husband Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, will prepare the traditional Christmas eve fare of the Arroyo family—Chinese ham with milk and sugar, and turkey.

Yesterday morning, the President, her husband and daughter Luli attended the last of the nine-day Misa de Gallo at the Sta. Maria Della Strada Parish Church on Katipunan Avenue, Quezon City.

In a text message coursed through his spokesperson Patricia Bunye, the First Gentleman said the family will be opening their gifts for each other today at their La Vista home.

Tomorrow, the First Family will motor to Baguio City where they will spend the rest of the Christmas season.

"We will go up to Baguio on the 26th but we will stop at Dagupan City for lunch at Matutina Restaurant, our favorite," Arroyo said.

Arroyo also said he hopes to play golf with his wife while in Baguio.

"If she will visit a town, I will go with her," Arroyo also said in his text message.

Ms Macapagal said she has already received a gift from her husband: a simple necklace, which goes well with a particular dress she has.

In a radio interview yesterday, Arroyo said their family is happy these days "because we're seeing that the people are also happy."

"We're giving out gifts and the people are happy," Arroyo said.

"I don't know yet," he said when asked what he expects as a gift from the President.

In a radio interview, Ms Macapagal said her family will have a "simple Christmas."

"Our customs going back to the old days in La Vista remain the same," President Macapagal said.

Enjoying high ratings from recent surveys, the President also thanked the people for their support for her 11-month-old administration.

"Let us also thank the Lord because somehow we manage to make it through despite worldwide economic difficulties," she said.

The President said the country weathered the global crisis because "the Filipino is a great worker."

"Let us be proud that our country is the home of the great worker," she said.

Asked what her Christmas wish is, Ms Macapagal said: "That we may be able to pull through this year and make it the basis of our economy's continued growth."

Her wish for the First Gentleman: "That he will be given respite by those who want to destroy me by destroying him."

THE FIRST COUPLE in an intimate pose under bright lanterns of the Sta. Maria Della Strada parish church in Katipunan, just outside their subdivision, after a Misa de Gallo.
EDWIN BACASMAS

Pols asked to work for unity, renewal

By A. N. Nocum

THE CATHOLIC Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has asked politicians to work for unity and effect a "political renewal," noting that their attitudes and behavior individual acts "inhibit authentic development."

In his Christmas message, CBCP President Archbishop Orlando Quevedo asked politicians to use this Christmas season to reflect on the need for them to focus on the real problems affecting the country.

"There is a common enemy before us, namely, poverty, injustice and criminality. We cannot resolve them when our political leaders are fighting among themselves about matters that seem petty in the light of serious problems," Quevedo said in his message published at the CBCP Monitor, the CBCP's official paper.

Quevedo observed that the media shares the blame for this problem whenever they project and sensationalize these petty fights among politicians.

"We cannot solve them when we ourselves and our media focus on issues that are peripheral even though they may be sensational," he said.

Quevedo said that he never expected economic progress and development to take root immediately following President Macapagal's assumption to office.

He said he had foreseen that "the years ahead would be very difficult" because it will take years for the country to develop economically.

But development becomes even more unattainable in the light of the fighting and bickerings among politicians.

"The attitudes, relationships, and behavior of our political leaders inhibit authentic development. Our leaders seem eager only to defend their respective turfs and political loyalties at the expense of the common good," he said.

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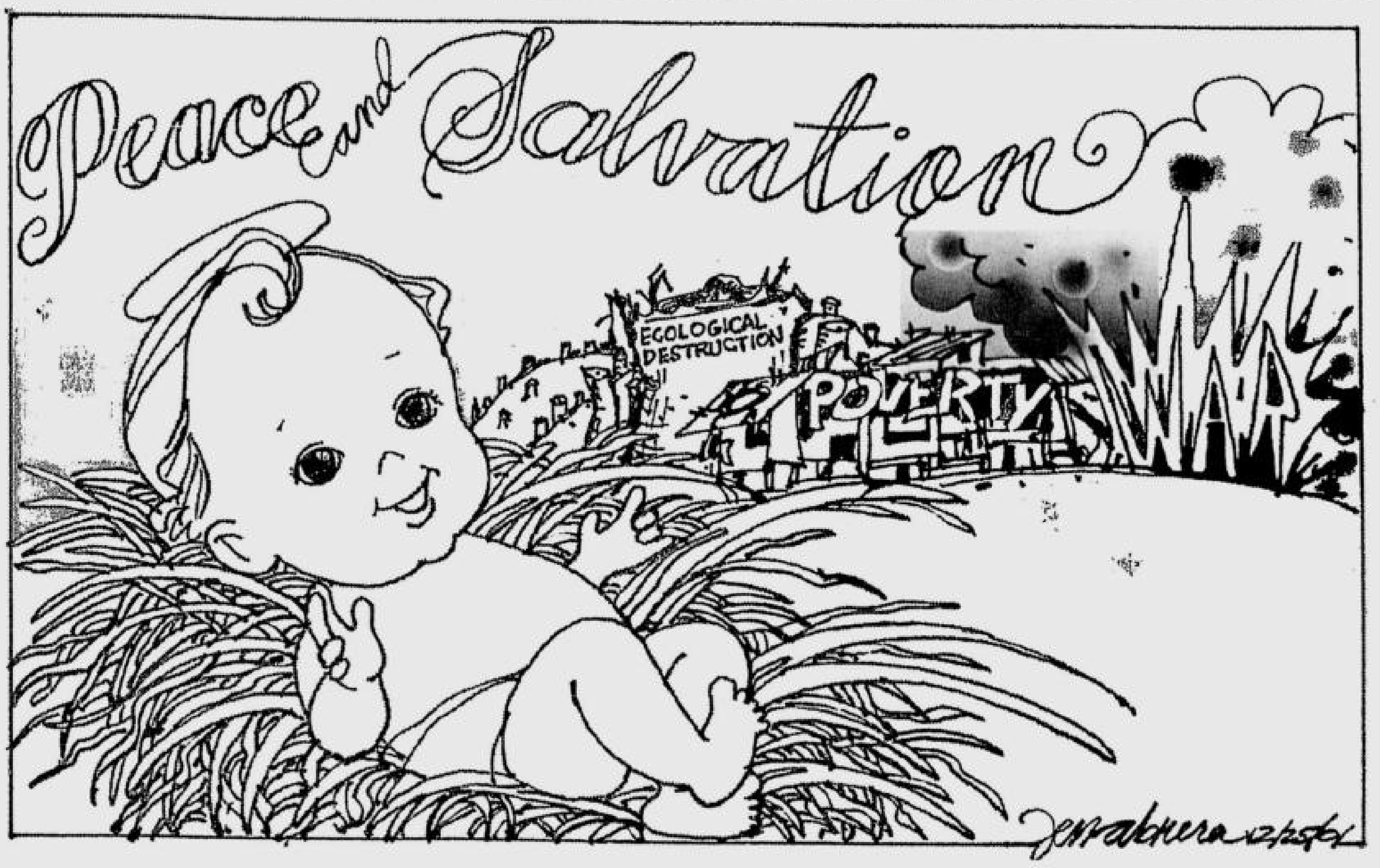

The Christmas story

EDITORIALS

HERE it is at last, ready or not. But who's ever really ready for Christmas Day? It never fails to surprise that it's so suddenly here. Which is a surprise by itself. Because it isn't as if it is a moveable feast. Through the year we wait and long for it. But when Christmas Day dawns, we say to one another: "So soon, so fast." Not that we are unprepared. Of course, being Filipinos with our storied fixation on Christmas, we had assiduously prepared for it.

How we skipped and hopped and rushed through our office work to get the shopping done; the gifts wrapped; the *noche buena* menu set; the lights and the angels up; the tree made heavy with the trimmings of the season. And so the carols have been replayed. The memories fill the heart.

From every corner of our homes, we see and smell the hush and the excitement; the wonder and yet the endlessly familiar; the hopes of all the years and the fulfillment. The house is luminous. There's no room for shadows. Only the shadow of Christmas Day slipping away as surely as it came. From the corner of our eye, we can see the day winging away from us, all tied up with joys, blessings and dreams. And right away, we sense the ache. We are not prepared to let go of Christmas Day.

Is this a Filipino thing? Day after Christmas, the Americans bring out their Christmas tree with the garbage. We hang on to our delicious holiday delirium. According to the latest survey of the Social Weather Stations, the Filipinos despite the tough times, carry on with their cash-intensive customs like the *noche buena* and the gift-giving to each other and their godchildren but especially decking their homes with holiday décor.

We don't go bananas for Easter, although by ecclesiastical standards, Easter is the biggest Christian feast. The rising of Christ from the dead is crucial to salvation history. It is the foundation of the Christian faith. As doctrine, it's right up there where heaven is—very high, indeed. And also hard to take. It's way out of the human experience. Even Thomas doubted. He, who had walked the earth with Jesus night and day, was pretty familiar with the almighty powers of the Lord. Still, Thomas had his doubts until he was made to feel the wounds of the risen Lord.

There's no doubting Christmas. Because it is not somewhere above the clouds. It is closer to home. It's all about family. A child is born, always a joyous occasion even long before Jesus was born. His mother and father, like all parents for all time, are protective of the Child. When it is time for Him to be born, the father looks for a suitable place. But the hotels are full in the small town of Bethlehem. The father makes do with the only available shelter he can find, a stable that he keeps warm with his caring and his wife's love beyond all telling.

This is the Christmas story. It's as simple as it is loved. It is as well loved as family. Maybe that's why God kept it all in the family. That we may somehow understand the meaning of the incredible mystery of God becoming man. Which is love.

'A merry little Christmas'

TO RALLY the Americans to the anti-terrorist cause, President George W. Bush has had a lot of help from symbols that move people to come together and stay together. With his own unwavering leadership and commitment to right the wrong, Bush himself has been a unifying force.

But there were the songs, too. "The Star-Spangled Banner" is a rousing anthem that inspire a swell of pride for the "home of the brave and the land of the free." Who can forget that image of the entire US Congress singing "God Bless America?" Or trying to, anyway. They could never sound as good as the professionals whom Larry King engaged post-Sept. 11 to end his shows on a morale-boosting note. But the congressmen were not any less stirring than the concerts on the east and the west coasts. "God Bless America" belted out at Yankee Stadium deeply touched Americans and the world.

And now, a Christmas song first sang by Judy Garland in 1943 has become for grief-striken Americans the "anthem of the season," reported the Asian Wall Street Journal.

As recorded by James Taylor, "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" finds resonance in the admirably hopeful mood of the American nation. Just a little song that packs a big wallop in the heart.

"Let your heart be light/from now on, all our troubles will be out of sight/next year, all our troubles will be miles away/So, have yourself a merry little Christmas now."

For one thing, that war has already been won.

Kids say the darndest things

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

MIKE REY has long flowing white hair, a white beard, a paunch and twinkling eyes. He is president of the homeowners' association of Maries Village in Quezon City, but he is also something else every Christmas season. He is, at least to children, Santa Claus.

The familiar red-and-white clothes, cap and boots of Santa are part of his wardrobe. As Christmas draws near, he is in demand to play Santa Claus at parties. But he doesn't do it for the money (he performs *pro bono*), he does it for the children—and for himself. He derives so much psychic income from making so many children happy.

But unlike other Santa Clauses who shed their false beards, clothes and boots after every performance and emerge in the street a different man, unrecognized by the children who sat on their laps and whispered to them their Christmas wishes only minutes before, Mike Rey cannot shed his own white beard and long white hair. They are his permanently, and he is recognizable as he walks the streets of his village.

Children run to him and hug him. "They make my heart big," he says. "That's the compensation I get from being Santa Claus."

He knows one child who sidles up to him every time he walks by their house and whispers, "I know who you are," as though the two of them were sharing a secret.

Does he feel like Clark Kent or Bruce Wayne when their secret identities are discovered? Not all. On the contrary, it makes him happy, he replies.

What is Christmas without children? It would not be as happy. For Christmas is for children. Adults spend a lot of time, energy and money to give gifts to children and share in the whoops of joy as they tear off the pretty wrapping and find the gift they're been hankering for.

And what is Christmas without Santa Claus? Christmas without Santa would be a sad one indeed. He is as much a symbol of Christmas as the Babe in the manger, the Christmas tree and the Star of Bethlehem. He is the visitor for whom millions of children try to stay up late and wait for on Christmas Eve but never get to see. Except sometimes in the person of real-life Santas like Mike Rey.

* * *

What do children whisper to Santa Claus besides the gifts they want? In their innermost thoughts, what do they think of the people and the world around them? You'd be surprised—and amused.

My younger granddaughter, Ma. Ysabella Cruz, who is 6 years old and a pre-schooler at Sta. Theresa's, has been writing down her thoughts at the backs of used stationery. They are an interesting insight into what goes on in children's minds. Here are a few samples, wrong spelling and all:

"Moms are loveable and playful but sometimes they can be a bit crazy."

"A cow gives us fresh milk and beef even if it has mad cow disease."

"Cats lick their kittens as a way to take a bath. That is hard to believe."

"Mermaids are very weird people living under the sea. We have never seen any but they live in the deep sea. It is known all over."

"Lions are predators which means they eat meat especially the flesh of humans and dead horses. A squirrel fears big creatures."

"Dragons were haunted creatures long ago. But modern dragons such as water dragons are not mythical like long-ago dragons are scary."

"Dolls are nice because of their accessories and clothes and a bit more things designed to make it look just right."

"Worms are yucky but helpful for the plants. I hate them."

"Bugs are very slimy. Timon and Pumba love them."

"Gowns are one of my favorite dresses. They are nice."

"Hedgehogs are prickly. They don't like the noise I don't like."

"Fishes are nice because of the patterns on their scales. And they are kept as pets but there are many ways to kill them."

Sometimes, there's more wisdom in what kids say than in what many politicians do.

* * *

Do you know why the American forces in Afghanistan cannot find Osama bin Laden?

Well, he has dyed his long beard white, tied a pillow to his abdomen, replaced his turban with a red-and-white pointed cap, put on black boots and red-and-white pants and coat. Then he slung a big bag on his back, carried a tiny bell in his hand and walked around laughing "ho-ho-ho."

He is probably doing that now in New York.

* * *

What if agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation found Osama bin Laden disguised as Santa Claus in New York? What if he is sitting inside a department store with kids on his lap, whispering to him their wishes with hundreds more waiting in line for their turn? Will they snap handcuffs on Santa and haul him off to jail in front of all those shocked children? Can they bear to break the hearts of all those kids? What will happen to the image of Santa? Santa Claus a criminal? What a horrible thought! Generations of children will be traumatized. They'll grow up hating the FBI. And they'll probably grow up to become criminals just to spite the FBI.

I think Santa Bin Laden would be safe in New York—at least until the Christmas season is over.

Lords

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I READ that "Lord of the Rings" premiered last week in London amid much pomp and glitter. The mammoth and very expensive fantasy (it has a cast of 2,400) held its audience in thrall. Critics apparently are already hailing it as a masterpiece.

Good for it. I can only hope it does as well as "Harry Potter," which has become the monster hit of all time. I can only hope, moreover, that it encourages viewers to buy the books ("Lord of the Rings" is a trilogy) the way "Harry Potter" has. Well, the good news is that the movie might do just that because it leaves the viewer in a lurch, or as that wonderful Pinoy phrase puts it, *bitin*. That was pointed out by Newsweek, which reviewed the movie a couple of weeks ago. The movie deals only with the first book of J.R.R Tolkien's trilogy. The reviewer himself, who confesses to not having read the books, says he's not going to wait for the second and third movies to know what happens next. He's heading for the nearest bookstore.

"Lord of the Rings" is not as easy reading as Harry Potter, but it is far more satisfying. Not least because of its poetry, which any movie version will have to sacrifice. I do not just mean the poetry of Tolkien's words, which have no mean cadence. I mean the literal poetry: The elves and various inhabitants of Middle Earth burst into song or narration in rhyme and meter. That is one of the charms of "Lord of the Rings," the resonance of its music as much as the magnitude of its conception.

"Lord of the Rings" is a fantasy, but like all great fantasies (my other all-time-favorite spinner of it is Ray Bradbury, whose writing is sublimely lyrical), it offers a penetrating insight into reality. The story has a fantastic premise and goes this way (as far as I can recall, I read it ages ago):

A ring that has the capacity to make its wearer all-powerful is being sought by the Dark Lord, a powerful wizard that has turned bad. (Sounds familiar? But of course. That's where George Lucas found his inspiration for Darth Vader and the Jedi Knights. Lucas originally wanted to do "Lord of the Rings" but could not buy the rights from Ralph Bakshi. So he decided to invent his own story, borrowing here and there, and wound up with "Star Wars." He also wound up, by some black sorcery, filthy rich and an unwitting slave to "Star Wars." He never directed another movie. A pity considering the promise he showed in "American Graffiti." Now there's one fantasy that offers much insight into reality, albeit of the tragic kind.)

The ring has fallen into the hands of the good guys, or the forces ranged against the Dark Lord. They have decided to destroy it, which can be done only by hurling it into the Ring of Fire in some distant crater. It would not do to wear the ring to fight the Dark Lord because wearing it guarantees being turned to evil oneself. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. No one trusts himself to carry out the task because of the many temptations having the ring in one's person offers. Not the wise and mighty wizard, Gandalf; not the regal figure, Aragorn; not the other noble and heroic giants and dwarves and everyone in-between who have joined the fight against the Dark Lord.

There is only one group of people who can be trusted to carry out the task, and they are the Hobbits. They have one formidable qualification, which all the others do not possess, and that is their utter—ordinariness. The Hobbits are cousin to the dwarves and the elves, but lack the latter's industry and cleverness. They have no ambition and drive, being perfectly content to sit all day, argue and quarrel over the silliest things, and drink ale at the end of day. (Come to think of it, not unlike Filipinos! Who knows, maybe we'll be good for something yet.) They're the perfect candidates for the job. Their very mediocrity would be a shield to temptation. Their very ordinariness would be proof against power.

Now, isn't that a brilliant premise for a story? A heroic task that can only be done by the most unheroic of beings? And isn't that a brilliant insight into the human condition? The capacity of power to lay low even the noblest of creatures? In the end, the leader of the group himself, Frodo, the dreamer, would battle mightily with himself, as the seductive promise of unbridled power takes its toll on his mind. But I'll say no more and leave the viewer—or better still, the reader—to discover the magic of the story for himself.

It's something worth pondering: the corrupting influence of power, or the kind that rulers wield, particularly today. A day that tells another magical story—another fantasy if you will—about a divine being who comes into the world as a child born in the most abject of circumstances. The magic of Christmas is not just that Jesus Christ came into the world. It is that he came to the world the way he did, the child of an impoverished carpenter and an equally impoverished—and jobless—woman. So impoverished they had to deliver the baby on a cold desert night in a shed reserved for animals.

That the son of God should be born into the world in a state of utter powerlessness—that is the mystery, and magic, and, well, power, of Christmas. The only guests to herald his coming being three kings from the East—the Middle East, one might suppose; there is as much wisdom in the East as in the West—who were struck by humility into a state of enlightenment. Or if one is to believe the Christmas song, the only other guest to greet the obscure newborn was a little drummer boy, who being as utterly destitute as the object of his adulation—"I am a poor boy too, pa ram pam pam pam"—could only offer his drumming as his gift to him. Ah, but some gifts weigh more than others, some songs soar more than others.

Now, isn't that a brilliant premise for a—faith? Merry Christmas, everyone.

Comments are welcome at dequiros@ vasia.com

Juan Diego and the heavenly portrait

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

A VERY Merry Christmas to one and all. May this season of grace, love and hope fill us and the whole world with joy and peace, as we welcome the Christ Child.

As our colleague Neal Cruz said in his column yesterday, it is only proper that our columns this Christmas be filled with "holy thoughts." Thus, at this time it would be appropriate to ponder on the recent news report that the Mexican Indian, Juan Diego, to whom the Virgin Mary had appeared in a series of apparitions in December 1531 in the outskirts of present-day Mexico City has become a candidate for canonization. This news remind us of the moving story of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patroness of the Americas, whom the Mexicans revere as "La Reina de Mexico." Guadalupe has become one of the most-visited Marian shrines in the world, and last month, I had the good fortune of being able to visit it. When the news about Diego's canonization came out, I read the story of his beloved lady's famed apparitions 470 years ago from the book "The Wonder of Guadalupe" by Francis Johnston. I've heard Diego's story many times before but each time it remains fascinating.

* * *

The lady who had appeared to Diego in the hilly and barren area of Tepeyac in the morning of Dec. 9, 1531, the Feast of the Immaculate Concepcion, appeared to be young, perhaps 15, and he was dazed "by the overwhelming loveliness of the vision." She told him of her ardent desire that a temple be erected on that site for her, "where I will show and offer all my love, my compassion, my help and my protection to the people...(where) I will hear their weeping and their sorrows, and will remedy and alleviate their sufferings, necessities and misfortunes." Diego was to convey this message to Bishop Juan Zummaraga, the first bishop appointed for the New World. But as the story goes, the prelate was terribly skeptical about this lady's request and asked Diego to tell her he wanted a "sign."

When Diego saw the lady again and begged her for that sign, she smiled and nodded, and asked him to return to that spot the following day. But that evening he got the news that his beloved uncle, Juan Bernardino, was dying. Diego was so worried about him that instead of meeting with the lady the next day, he decided to fetch a priest instead. But the lady appeared to him again, and told him not to worry about his uncle since she would take care of him. (She appeared to Bernardino later that night and healed him.) Diego was to proceed to the spot where he first saw her and gather as many flowers as he could and bring them back to her.

* * *

The spot where he was directed to go was a terrain so stony that it only thistles, cactus and mesquite bushes grew on it. It was impossible for flowers to grow there, especially in the dead of winter. But Diego came upon "a brilliant profusion of flowers, including Castillian roses, blooming in the frozen soil" and he noticed that they "glittered with dewdrops and that their delicious fragrance rose like a breath of Paradise." Spreading out his tilma (the native blanket-like shawl), Diego filled it with the flowers and descended to where the lady was waiting for him in an oval blaze of light. Showing her the flowers, the lady "re-arranged them carefully with her own hands, saying as she did so, 'My little son, these varied flowers are the sign which you are to take to the bishop. Tell him in my name that in them he will recognize my will and that he must fulfill it." She enjoined him not to reveal the *tilma's* contents to anyone until he was in the bishop's presence.

At the bishop's palace, the servants refused to let Diego in unless he showed them what he was clutching in his *tilma*. He opened it a bit and "they gasped at the sight of the magnificent blooms and were all but overcome by their exquisite fragrance. Avidly, they tried to snatch at them, but as they did so, the flowers seemed to melt into the sides of the *tilma*, as if they were an embroidery."

* * *

This was quickly reported to the bishop, and Diego was ushered in. He told the bishop about the apparition of the Virgin and her instructions about the flowers to be picked as a "sign" for the bishop, and how she arranged them herself. "With that Juan released the ends of his *tilma* and the flowers, mingled with Castillian roses, cascaded to the floor in a profusion of color and perfume."

As Johnston narrated it, "Zummaraga gazed at them, momentarily speechless. It was the sign he had asked of the Blessed Virgin to show that she had heard his prayer for peace in the country. Full of wonder he lifted up his eyes to the *tilma* and at that instant there appeared on it a glorious image of the Mother of Christ."

"For one electrifying moment, the eyes of every person in that hushed room were riveted on the glowing image as if they were contemplating an apparition. Then slowly they sank to their knees in awe and veneration. Utterly perplexed, Juan glanced down at the object of their gaze to see what it was that had transfixed them, and was overwhelmed to find himself contemplating an exact replica of the celestial Lady he had seen at Tepeyac."

Continued Johnsston: "Juan's eyes shone in stupefaction. So she had come, almost in person, it seemed, to confront the bishop with this further incontestable sign, a wondrous visual representation of her very self, which millions down the centuries were to contemplate with the same awe and veneration that he now saw reflected in the faces of the bishop and his entourage."

* * *

The bishop embraced Juan Diego and begged his forgiveness for having doubted him. He invited him for the night and promised to visit with him the spot where the lady wanted the temple to be erected. Then "with utmost care, the bishop untied the *tilma* at the back of Juan's neck and reverently conveyed the transfigured garment to his private oratory where he could contemplate it to his heart's content."

Today, this same *tilma* with the image of the Virgin Mary, the only known portrait of her that was "painted in heaven," is carefully preserved behind the altar at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. It is revered not only by the Mexicans but by around 20 million pilgrims from all parts of the world annually, many of whom come away from the shrine closer to God and, repentant of their sinfulness, truly converted to a life of prayer.

Interestingly, the natural life of the *ayate* fiber from which the *tilma* was woven is a mere 20 years, but Diego's *tilma* with the heavenly image has hung in open damp air amid the emissions of countless candles for at least 100 years. It is said that a powerful bomb was exploded directly beneath it, and yet the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe was preserved in radiant beauty.

A gift for families

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

IN OUR family tradition, gift-giving took place last night, as we siblings and our families gathered for dinner, a short program and get-together, and then a rambunctious distribution of gifts, with gift-wrapping paper flying all over the place, ribbons tangling underfoot, and exclamations of surprise and delight (real or feigned) filling the air.

But it's never too late for giving more gifts, I believe, so here's my holiday *pahabol* to readers and their families.

I was introduced to a booklet called "Be-good-to-your-family Therapy" some Christmases ago by my friend Jurgette Honculada. I since found some copies in, of all places, the Pink Sisters' Convent in Tagaytay and the little book has proven to be a well-appreciated present ever since.

It's written by Kass Dotterweich, who describes herself as a mother of six who lives with her family in St. Louis, Missouri. A managing editor for Liguori Publications, a religious publishing house, she has also written other books on family life and self-enhancement. The book also comes with delightful humorous illustrations by R.W. Alley, but too bad there isn't enough space here for including the drawings. Just imagine them, then.

There are 38 helpful "pointers" in the booklet, but I'm including just a few to whet your appetite for a full reading. May these tips help you live as a family in greater joy, fulfillment, acceptance and growth! *Maligayang Pasko*, dear friends!

* * *

REMEMBER the sacredness of your family relationship. God created you to be parent to these children, and God created them to be children to you. You bring to each other what no one else can.

* * *

FAMILIES gather to celebrate holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, special occasions. Use these milestones to create traditions, and use your traditions to build memories and connect hearts.

* * *

WELCOME the unplanned moment into your family; leave room for spontaneity and serendipity. The unexpected is where we find some of life's sweetest gifts.

* * *

FAMILY means sharing responsibilities. Assign chores according to abilities, preferences and time. Be flexible; rotate chores for variety. When the whole family chips in to do a big job, enjoy the team spirit and celebrate your accomplishment.

* * *

A HEALTHY family strives for balance. When the demands of work, school, social activities, and church or civic responsibilities rob you of precious quality time your family needs, everyone suffers. Learn to say "no" so you can say "yes" to what matters most.

* * *

BUILD family faith by encouraging prayer: Sunday worship, mealtime prayer, informal moments in times of fear, sadness, or joy. Family prayer has the power to transform hearts, heal wounds and restore peace.

* * *

LOVING touch goes deep—all the way to the soul. Use back pats, quick hugs, goodnight kisses and delicate tickles to reassure, affirm and comfort. Touch says "I love you" in countless ways.

* * *

THE HONORS of one family member belong to all family members. Recognize strengths, affirm one another, be generous with praise, and share the spotlight.

* * *

MISTAKES, misunderstandings and disappointments are daily fare in family life. Examine expectations; don't demand perfection. Above all, be tolerant.

* * *

TEARS express who you are in your most intense moments. Let your family be a safe place for tears. Allow them to bring you the gifts of healing, peace and closeness.

* * *

EVERY family has conflict. But if you avoid blame, really listen and try creative solutions, conflict can bring deeper understanding and appreciation for each member's distinctness.

* * *

PLAN, set goals, and dream about the future together. Talking about what you'd like to do, where you'd like to go, what you'd like to be as a family deepens your sense of identity, solidarity and purpose.

* * *

FAMILIES change: they relocate, welcome new members, and grieve the loss of those who die. Notice and respect change. Allow expressions of sadness, disappointment, anger—and talk about how to adjust. The family that changes together grows together.

* * *

PERSONAL things and space are sacred. Respect one another's need, right and privilege to define personal territory. It's one important way individuality takes shape.

* * *

HELP your family accept and celebrate the diversity of our "world family." Intolerance, bigotry, hostility and fear of differences are learned or prevented within the family.

* * *

THIS present, never-to-be-repeated moment with your family is the moment that matters. Don't miss it.

* * *

A FINAL WISH: May you always be present to one another, celebrating as family and joining other families in our common effort to build community and create a larger, loving family that embraces the world!

Christmas advisory

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

I THOUGHT I would share these deep philosophical thoughts because so many of us (at a certain age, anyway) can identify with them. For years on end it seemed I could eat whatever I wanted and however much of it and still fit into a size 8 or 10, which seemed normal enough. Then I gave up nicotine—or rather, it gave up on me.

Believe it or not that's when my problems began. It appears I exchanged my smoker's cough for a sweet tooth. This is from someone who never even glanced at a dessert table all her life. Next I started buying boxes of chocolates that I ate while watching the news on TV (I think I can be forgiven for that; some of the stuff that goes on is enough to turn you suicidal or murderous). Before I knew it, I was eating ice cream from the container. (The fathers at Don Bosco sell a particularly creamy type of gelato. Try the melon or maybe the strawberry. Or why not both?)

Suffice to say before I went out, I would have to try on at least three or four outfits before finding one that fit. It got so bad I weighed as much as when I was nine months pregnant. This time there was no baby to show for it—just a big, round tummy. Lo and behold my cheekbones disappeared and I grew apple cheeks.

Adrian was aghast. Before I looked "decadent," and now I looked just plain "healthy." Yikes, I knew I was in trouble when I understood what a middle-age spread was by looking in the mirror.

It was a toss-up. Either I bought a whole new set of clothes two sizes bigger or I changed my life style. Needless to say my slacks were sent to the *costurera* to have the waistline adjusted, buttons on blouses realigned so they could close, favorite clothes donated to relatives who could still wear belts. Once the maid snidely commented that the outfit I had on would fit if I made sure not to eat or drink anything and didn't sit down. It went back into the closet.

So now that the holidays are upon us, we who're stuck buying X and XL are beset by all those nasty annual tips on how not to gain those extra pounds during the holidays. All kinds of do's and don'ts like: eat lots of veggies preferably full of worm holes; try a teaspoonful of tiramisu and forget the second helping; go for the fish not the prime rib, etc. It's too dismal for words.

But what's the use of accepting invitations if you won't eat all that crackling, crispy *lechon* skin? How about that old-time favorite of mine: strawberry shortcake? Okay, I'll settle for Bacardi rum cake then.

You have to admit that plate of uncooked, unsalted carrot sticks, cauliflower and celery stalks alongside the *chicharon bulaklak* is particularly unappetizing. True, my hostess is Vicky Bello's favorite patient, but at the rate this is going, there's going to be more of me to love.

Here are some healthy tips I've followed to get to where I am:

Drink as much red wine as you can. I don't know how many calories it has per sip, but so what? I'm told its good for the heart. Enjoy it. It's not every day you can have the bottle to yourself. Besides it's Christmas already and I don't know where the year went. Since it's later than I think I'll have more of everything.

Make sure you don't miss out on the gravy for your rice, mashed potatoes and bread. It's impolite to leave a plate with food on it. Wipe the plate with remaining bread and eat soaked bread. If there's pasta, have some, too. Add butter if necessary. I think it was Sophia Loren who said carbohydrates is good for you especially with olive oil. Make sure you cover it with lots of rich, gooey Carbonara (or whatever creamy sauce is available) and Parmessan.

This is not the time to control your gustatory cravings. Everyone predicts next year is going to be more horrible than this year. We may be down to water and moldy bread with nothing, or we may have to fast and abstain whether we like it or not. So eat and be merry. Have two, or three, or maybe four of everything.

Dessert? Heck, stand in front of the *Tocino del Cielo* and have as many as you like. Never mind the fresh fruits. In the provinces, you can ask for *ratiles* and *macopa* for free. (Trust me, they give them away in Bohol.) Are they offering chocolates after dinner? Have some of those, too, and pocket the rest for the ride home.

Here's a recipe for a Christmas cake sent by a dear friend that you may find useful:

Ingredients: 1 cup of water, 1 tsp baking soda, 1 cup of sugar, 1 tsp salt, 1 cup of brown sugar, lemon juice, 4 large eggs, nuts, 1 bottle vodka, 2 cups of dried fruit.

Sample the vodka to check quality. Take a large bowl, and check the vodka again. To be sure it is of the highest quality, pour one level cup and drink. Repeat. Turn on the electric mixer. Beat one cup of butter in a large fluffy bowl. Add one teaspoon of sugar. Beat again. At this point it's best to make sure the vodka is *shtill* OK. Try another cup-just in case. Turn off the *mixerer*. Break 2 *leggs* and add to the bowl and chuck in the cup of dried fruit. Pick fruit off floor. Mix on the turner. If the fried *druit* gets stuck in the *beaterers* pry it loose with a *drewscriver*. Sample the vodka to check for *tonsisticity*. Next, sift two cups of salt. Or something. Check the vodka. Now shift the lemon juice and strain your nuts. Add one table. Add a spoon of sugar, or *somefink*. Whatever you can find. *Greash* the oven. Turn the cake tin 360 degrees and try not to fall over. Don't forget to beat off the turner. Finally, throw the bowl through the window, finish the vodka and kick the cat.

Merry Christmas to all.

My silent Christmas

YOUNGBLOOD

Joanna Paula L. Cailas

*We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—**Ed.***

"JUST hear those sleigh bells ring-a-ling-ting-ting-ting-a-ling-tu..." That's the first line of my favorite Christmas carol, which are among the many carols radio stations start playing as early as September. Then, right after Halloween (or even before it) some houses and establishments are already "dressed in holiday style." Enter December, and everywhere you will see Santa Claus, Christmas trees and colorful lanterns that cheer up commuters stuck in traffic made heavier by Christmas sales in the malls and the crowds that just double in size during the season. Anywhere you look, people are rushing about, buying gifts, mailing letters and cards, shopping. But amid all the hustle and bustle, everyone is still "taking time to be kind to one and all, hu, hu, hu."

Is it because "Santa Claus is coming to town"? For the kids and the young at heart, maybe. But for the others, perhaps it's because "it's that time of year when the world's sincere and we'd like to find a way to show the things that words can't say."

Aside from all these, of course, we feast our ears on the melodies that define the season. Because like the chatter of birds that accompany daylight, these timeless compositions mark the beginning of our celebration while also lighting up the brighter side of our beings, telling us that the time of love and joy is here. People as fierce as leopards become as sweet as doves, enemies become friends, the grouch becomes a smiler.

I would dance, I would sing along or just smile because these songs brought a special kind of happiness to me. I wouldn't let the holidays pass without turning on the radio.

That was nearly three years ago. Now, I just pretend not to see the component every time I'm in the living room. I don't even dare to look at it. It hurts a little just to see it is turned on. And that is because if someone put it at its highest volume, my eardrums will be pierced and I will be aware of the pain without hearing the sound.

When we go to the mall, all I have to do is close my eyes and it's not hard to imagine that I'm actually buried under the earth, with no one, nothing making sounds around me. All the music, laughter, gaiety and noise that are never absent from any crowded place are now stocked in some dark corner of my memory, which is already filled to bursting with everything I want to hear again.

Actually, this is my third silent Christmas. So I'm getting more and more used to all the things someone in my condition should do to keep from being depressed, like singing my favorite songs myself when I'm beginning to get tired of the quiet, referring to my prayer book so I can participate and respond correctly during the Holy Mass, focusing on the lips of anyone who is kind enough to talk to me so that I can understand what he is saying and counting my blessings instead of ruing my one disability.

It all started when I was 13. I had TB meningitis in the middle of my second year of high school. One day I regained consciousness at the hospital only to discover that I was living in an unusually silent world, which made me wonder if I was still among the living. After I saw my loved ones talking excitedly, apparently happy over something, without me hearing their voices when they were so near, I realized that not only was I alive but also much different from before.

For someone as inquisitive as me, for someone who loves music and who still has a lot of goals to reach, it's a shame. I lose the sense of the beauty around me when I close my eyes. Worse, I have been forced to stop my schooling, which is more than a little sad because it makes me wonder whether I will still be able to go back to the high school days that passed me by. High school is the most colorful part of a student's life, and I can attest to that.

I have found out that losing your ears is not very much easier than losing an arm and a leg. Sure, 80 percent of human knowledge is acquired through the eyes, but the remaining 10 that we perceive through our ears is still and will forever be essential, not to mention beautiful as well.

I could go on blaming myself for being such a bad girl, or my parents for not bringing me to the hospital at once, or the doctors themselves, but I know it was nobody's fault. No one wanted this to happen to me. If this is my fate or the Lord's will so that I might become a better human being, I'll face it and accept it.

What's the use of complaining? I'll only feel depressed and make the people around me feel the same way. I've read that optimism is a healer and that optimists, aside from having more friends than those who always complain, also live longer and happier lives. Besides it is not the right time to write about problems when we are in the season of hope.

Though hearing aids can't help me and I can't understand what the characters in my favorite shows say, there's still a lot for me to be grateful for aside from the fact that I got out of the hospital without losing my sight or my sanity. There's my whole family, my relatives, my friends and a lot more. And there is a Special Someone up in heaven who loves me and cares for me no matter what. The thought that my past shortcomings have already been forgiven and forgotten by Him is really comforting!

On Christmas Eve, as we gather around our simple *noche buena* after going to Mass, the *belen* catches my eye. In the stillness of my evening, I suddenly hear a child-like voice whispering in my ear: "I love you, my child, and you're the very reason why I came." As I touch my hand to the Baby Jesus in wonder, I think I can feel His heartbeat as He lies on the humble manger. His words and the feel of His heart beating with love for you and me more than make up for my inability to hear the sounds of Christmas. And I wouldn't have noticed them if I were listening to the radio like before.

Now as I remember that the Savior was born one "silent night," I think I can go on spending silent Christmases for as long as our home is filled with love and happiness and I can "hear' the Celebrator whispering to my soul. They are the ones that make my Christmas complete after all!

Indeed, my silent Christmas isn't entirely without sound because I hear a beautiful song coming from my heart. It is the music composed by my faith in His love.

"Do you hear what I hear?" If you do, then "let's sing Merry Christmas and a Happy Holiday! This season, may we never forget the love we had from Jesus..."

Joanna Paula L. Cailas is 15 years old. Her Christmas wish is to have her hearing back so that she can resume her studies. But she says she would rather not hear again if she has to listen to the sounds of war and the anguished cries of a suffering people.

THEY SAID

Stranger to victory

"We have literally forgotten the meaning of victory. When we won, we were at a loss for words. We did not know how to react."

—Sta. Lucia team manager Buddy Encarnado after his team won its first ever championship since joining the Philippine Basketball Association in 1993

Unaccepting till now

"I am sad that up to this time, the former president has not yet understood what Edsa II was all about. He has not yet learned that his own actions were the cause, Edsa II was merely the effect."

—Archbishop Oscar Cruz on former President Joseph Estrada

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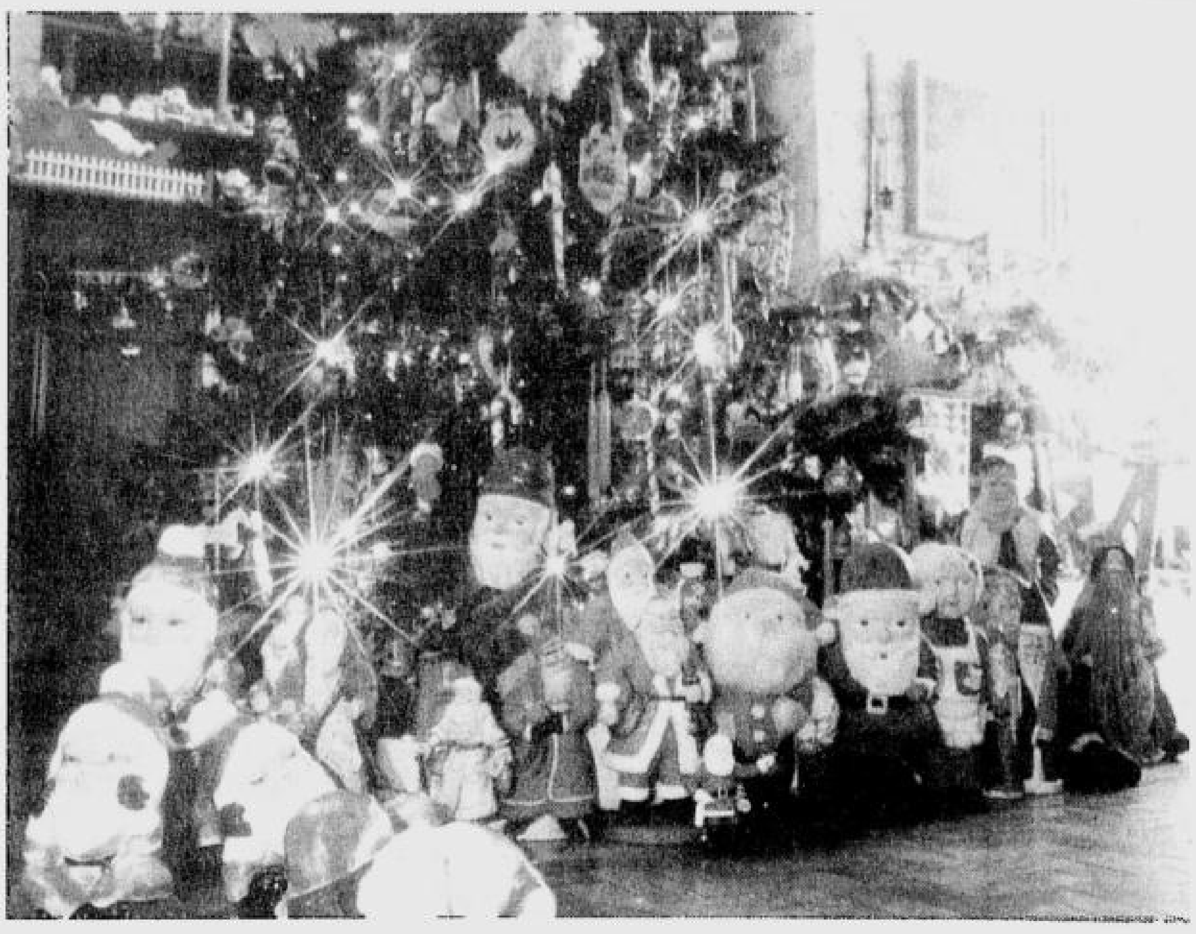

A Christmas of purity and peace

CHRISTMAS is children and children are Christmas. For a few weeks everything and everyone in both Christian and non-Christian world shift to a primordial level of being, often lost to adults but familiar to children. The world attempts to recapture its original sense of innocence and goodness lost to the insanity of violence, materialism and indifference. It makes an effort to look away from itself and look at the apparently weak, helpless figure of a Child. It does this to achieve the twofold act of remembering and recovering one's lost childhood and innocence, and renewing one's sense of gratitude and dependence on the Creator, the source of all life, freedom and liberation.

The world looks at a Baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes beheld and enjoyed by his grateful and faithful parents. This Baby's name is Jesus. His parents' names are Joseph and Mary. The occasion is Christmas, the birth of the God-Child, the Messiah, the Christ!

The Infant Jesus venerated on mangers and altars this Christmas is a striking image of purity and peace. The spotless, sinless Jesus with his holy parents, Joseph and Mary, cry out to a world weighed down and oppressed by sin.

The world of today and yesterday continues to suffer from the effects of materialism seen in the spread of wars, disease, ignorance and indifference. The worship of matter, often synonymous with money, continues to taint and corrupt the human heart, mind and soul. When materialism and money replace God in the hearts, minds and souls of people, we should no longer be surprised by the spread of the less-than-godly, from petty crimes to war and genocide. There is war in Afghanistan and Basilan. There is war in the hearts and minds of both aggressor and victim.

The gods of war and the guns of war may not decide to silence the noise of hatred, revenge and self-righteousness in each others' hearts, but the speechless, voiceless, inarticulate Child in the manger smiles, chuckles and says something else. He invites us to purity, empty our minds, hearts and souls of the filth accumulated in the past months. He invites us to prepare a manger within and outside our hearts, and pay particular attention to the effects of materialism on children and youth.

To parents, as you bring your children to the movies this holiday season, be selective of the material that you expose them to. Be alert to the ubiquitous dangers that may pollute the purity and innocence of their young hearts and minds. The material may be there, but you as parents and guardians have the responsibility to guide them as they wade through the filth which they may come across in this life.

To the children: Merry Christmas! May the adults of this world be aware of your material, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs and give you all the love and care you deserve this Christmas and all-year through.—**FR. ROBERT P. REYES, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City**

LETTERS

Issue is public interest

THE APPEAL of Tourism Secretary Richard J. Gordon for an end to the media row between Transportation Secretary Pantaleon Alvarez and the Philippine Airlines should be heeded. It only confuses the issue regarding the qualifications of Alvarez as he seeks confirmation before the Commission on Appointments.

Instead of blaming PAL and its chair, Lucio Tan, for his troubles, Alvarez should concentrate on defending himself against the plunder charges filed against him before the Office of the Ombudsman. He should also clear himself with regard to charges that he is favoring the Philippine International Air Terminal Corp. (Piatco), which has been criticized for allegedly attempting to put up a monopoly in airport services through Terminal 3.

Alvarez has been claiming that he was being criticized for not upholding the bid of the Asia Emerging Dragon Corp. for the construction and operation of Terminal 3. But the AEDC has long been abolished, never having gotten off the ground because the Filipino taipans who formed it could not come to an agreement. It is now dead in the water.

What is important is that the public interest be served. Our international airport and transport services are in a state of disrepair and neglect. There is an urgent need to upgrade and modernize them, as suggested by Sen. Blas Ople. But at the same time the operational expenses should be reasonable so as not to unduly burden the public with useless additional expenses.

PAL says it has been paying all its dues at the airport. If Alvarez disagrees, he should do what every law-abiding citizen and government official should do: go to court.—**M.F. ALMARIO, Project 6, Quezon City**

Christmas without christmas

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

IT'S cold here, and I mean freezing cold, as in 2 degrees below zero. Yet it doesn't quite feel like Christmas.

I'm writing this in China, where we're having our family reunion, and here, Christmas isn't celebrated. Every morning you see students going off to school. A few stores occasionally have a bit of Christmas decorations but they come through looking almost strange: spray-painted snow and a cut-out figure of Santa Claus. Yesterday I passed a store that was playing "Jingle Bells." When I passed the store again an hour later, it was still playing "Jingle Bells."

In a way I'm relieved, spared of the commercialism we have in places where Christmas is celebrated. "Jingle Bells" over and over again would drive me nuts, but at least I can still escape. Back home you move from one store to another only to be assaulted by more Christmas carols blaring away. And then there's the traffic and the foul mood of fellow shoppers.

No, I don't miss that commercial part of Christmas. What I do miss are the dawn Masses. The other day we dropped by Shanghai's one and only Catholic church to ask if they had midnight Masses, and they said no, the last one is at 6 p.m. I'm wondering, too, if I missed out on Christmas concerts in Manila; last year I was with friends at a Christmas Eve concert with Handel's "Messiah" at Malate church.

But being away has made me think, too, about what Christmas is. It helps being with my sister and brother-in-law, both of whom share my interest in religion and theology. (My sister actually went to theology school.) When I asked them for suggestions for my Christmas column, they became quite animated as they recalled a homily they'd heard several years ago, delivered by a Protestant minister. He'd pointed out how people tend to think of Christmas in terms of lavish gift-giving and spectacular rituals. He then asked: "Whatever happened to the Baby?"

Good question. Whatever happened, indeed, to the birth of Jesus and its meanings for Christians? Central to Christianity is the concept of the Incarnation, of Christ being born as a human being to redeem humanity. Now, that belief in the Incarnation is certainly not unique: Buddhists have a notion of bodhisatvas, of humans who are ready for nirvana, meaning they don't need to be reborn again, but who choose to continue being reborn as humans to help others achieve nirvana.

But the story of Jesus, my sister reminds me, is more than the Incarnation. The Christmas story is that of a carpenter and his wife, looking unsuccessfully for lodgings. In the end, the child Jesus is born in a stable. Not exactly what you'd expect of a Messiah.

But precisely, throughout the Bible (and, certainly, throughout human history), we've tended to confuse the grand for the great. The Bible is full of stories of the most unassuming men and women called to perform formidable tasks. Abraham was very old when God called on them to lead. Moses was said to be a poor speaker, maybe even a stutterer.

I thought, too, of Mary and Joseph, both very simple but strong people. The Christmas story, then, isn't just about Jesus but about simplicity and humility. Remembering the Christmas story gives us a better vantage point toward understanding Jesus and Christianity. The theologian Karen Armstrong once described Jesus as an "itinerant faith healer." We imagine him like some politician, when in reality this carpenter's son was considered subversive because of his very basic, austere messages, carrying on the tradition of the great rabbi Hillel and his "Golden Rule": "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor."

Christmas, too, should remind us that the greatness of Jesus comes with his humanity, his being "one of us." I think this is one reason why Filipinos so love the Santo Niño—it is easier to relate to this child Jesus than to some white old man up in the sky or even to an adult Jesus. The Santo Niño is itself incarnated in many forms, depending on the community venerating the image (I've seen burly generals' offices "guarded" by a Santo Niño dressed as a, well, general).

I will admit I do cringe though when I see such images, wondering if the child Jesus, like Christmas, has also become the object of modern idolatry, of graven images and Christmas commodities. Is it surprising that Christmas has been so completely stripped of its original spirit of simplicity and renewal, and that Christianity itself has become a series of extravaganzas, of outward displays of Christian faith that parallel the glitter and tinsel of Christmas decorations?

I do miss the celebrations back home, but maybe, too, there are advantages being away, and of thinking about Christmas without christmas.

Equity holdings in UCPB

NEAL H. Cruz has always been accurate with his facts. But I wonder why his column last Dec. 19, titled "Coco levy: The cure may be worse than the disease," contained serious distortion of facts.

Quoting an alleged Commission on Audit report, he claimed that 77.9 percent of the equity of the United Coconut Planter's Bank is controlled by 11 individuals and companies only. The total equity holdings of the 11 individuals and companies listed by him is 265.7 million shares only. This is roughly 35 percent of the total equity of 747.17 million shares of the UCPB.

Cruz failed to include the equity holdings of the coconut farmers (385 million shares) per stock and transfer book of the UCPB shares as of October 1987 from where the records were taken, which is 51 percent of the total equity of the UCPB as well as the shares of the CIIF Oil Mills (38 million) and the shares of Cocolife Group (23.6 million) both equivalent to 8 percent of the entire UCPB equity. Both are owned by the coconut farmers.

The facts stated here can be verified from the COA report on the audit of the coco levy funds it conducted in 1986.

The conclusion of Cruz that "had the Supreme Court, therefore, declared the coco levy as 'private' funds, the UCPB and the other corporations it financed would have been owned by these lucky individuals and companies, not the farmers who paid for it" deserves immediate rectification in the interest of truth, justice and fairness.

Cruz also said that "most of the coco levy receipts, on which would be based the amount of refund to each individual, have already been bought by the rich landowners."

I went around the country from 1981 until 1984, conducting dialogues with coconut farmers, averaging three to four hours per meeting, and I never received even a single complaint about big landowners buying coco fund receipts from the small farmers. The issuance of these receipts under Republic Act 6260 was not for the purpose claimed by Cruz. It was issued as a receipt for the levy payment by the farmers and later on it would be made as basis for determining the coconut farmers' equity holdings in the Coconut Investment Co. which was supposed to be set up at the end of the 10-year period. This fund is not part of the Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF) which owns the 27-percent SMC shares.

Maybe Cruz was referring to the UCPB certificates of stocks issued to the coconut farmers, some of which were sold by the holders who believed in the intrigues sowed by the enemies of the leaders of the coconut industry and bought by Cocolife (which is also owned by the coconut farmers) after the suspension of the coco levy in 1982.

Cruz said further, "Luckily, the high court declared the coco levy funds as 'public' funds which means they would go to the government."

The Supreme Court did not declare the levy funds as "public" funds. It merely said the levy funds are prima facie "public" in character. The Sandiganbayan is given by the Supreme Court six months to decide the cases pending before them.

It is worth mentioning here that PD 775, PD 961 and PD 1468 explicitly declared the levy funds to be "private" funds. Unless the Supreme Court declares these decrees as unconstitutional, the levy funds will remain "private" funds for the development of the coconut industry with the coconut farmers as participants and direct beneficiaries. The term "coconut farmers" should be interpreted to mean coconut landowners and their tenants/workers receiving a share of the copra production and their heirs during the period from 1973 to 1982 when the coco levy was collected.—**JOSE T. MARCHAN, president, Coco-Industry Rationalization Movement Inc. (Crami), 1026 Belen St., Nena Samio Bldg., Paco Park, Paco, Manila**

Five-year prescription period for collection of realty taxes

I NOTED an error in the "Notice of Delinquency in the Payment of Real Property Tax" of the OIC city treasurer of Parañaque, published in the INQUIRER last Nov. 23. The period of delinquency stretches far back to 1981, 1979 and 1973. There is no law authorizing a local government unit to pursue the collection of real property taxes that have become delinquent for these years.

The law invoked in the notice is Republic Act 7160, which is commonly known as the Local Government Code of 1991. This took effect only on Jan. 1, 1992. Since a law does not have a retroactive affect, the provisions of RA 7160 on real property tax cannot therefore be applied to realty tax delinquencies for 1991 and the years before that.

Additionally, the legality of pursuing the collection of delinquent realty taxes for the years 1992 to 1996 may be in doubt. Section 270 of the law says that real property taxes not collected within five years from the date they are due have already prescribed. Thus the local government has in effect forfeited its right to collect the tax. In the absence of fraud or intent to evade payment, a property owner claiming the defense of prescription may be freed of his responsibility to settle his realty tax delinquencies for these years.

It is suggested that the OIC city treasurer of Parañaque amend his Notice of Delinquency to conform with the law.—**LEOPOLDO P. PARREÑO, Parreño Realty Appraisal & Tax Consultancy, Maglalang Bldg., J.P. Rizal St., Davao City**

Meet the real Badoy

I AM Justice Anacleto Badoy's daughter and I am aware that this letter can be easily dismissed, but I will write it anyway.

A lot has been alleged, assumed and said about my father and, thanks to the information highway, I have been able to read them. Critical comments have come from writers I have long admired and admire still. Solita Monsod, for example, in one of her columns, labeled my father as disabled therefore incompetent. While I was initially irked by it, I still respect her opinion.

I have always been a fan of Monsod. I admire her keen intellect, her quick wit and her sharp views on economic and political matters. I assume that her opinions are well-grounded and that her intentions are not less than noble. I suppose that by writing the way she did about my father, she was pushing for a more efficient judicial system, and I respect that.

I only wish she will have the chance to meet my Papa and interview him before she writes another article. That will definitely make for an interesting piece—granted, of course, that my Papa will hear her at all. But then I've heard her speak, so I think even he can hear her loud and clear.

Let me say that compared to the other members of my family, my reaction to Monsod's rage over Papa's hearing impediment was calm. Why? Because I am deaf myself. I have completely lost my hearing in one ear, so I am not sensitive about being ribbed as "*bingi*."

I think Papa shares my reaction. For my father would rather be deaf than stupid or corrupt. He is indeed deaf, but he is intelligent and honest.

As a Filipino citizen myself, I'd rather have an honest public official with a hearing impediment than someone who hears sharply, including bribe offers being whispered.

Now, I am aware of the stories being spun about Papa. I have been told about the insults hurled by early morning AM radio mouths who think that hurling insults makes their program more interesting. I congratulate them for exercising their right to speak the maximum and for making my surfing the Internet more interesting for me. I now hold my breath every time I open a Philippine News website.

Sometimes, I shake my head and say to myself how different things would be if these so-called radio announcers had a chance to meet my father. But then again, I am glad they haven't, for what a waste of time that would be for Papa.

My father is an enigma, to the public and even to me. Though he is as real as your favorite uncle, he has the aura of a *lolo* you have never met but always hear of. He is prone to waxing poetic and he isn't quirk-free. He is far from unflappable but you know that he is straight in his dealings. He is known as a public official who had all the opportunity to do so but has not compromised his integrity despite the temptation, what with having so many children to support. He is indubitably intelligent and spiritual. He believes in his religion and has never been apologetic when he speaks of his faith.

Is he perfect? Definitely not. But then, who is? Not me. Not even my idol Winnie.

But we all try. We all want to do the best we can with what we have. And Papa is like that.

I have always shared my father's dreams of contributing to the welfare of the country. And though I am aware of his humanity and his dignified imperfection, I stand by him. I remain his daughter and I've never been prouder.—**P. THERESE BADOY, assistant director, Office of the Missions, Diocese of San Jose, CA**

A pastor who has kept his flock together

THIS is to clarify the allegations contained in the petition against Fr. Eleuterio Carton, as reported by Raj Padilla in your Dec. 10 issue. The complaints are baseless, unfounded and malicious. They are brazen lies designed to malign and embarrass our beloved parish priest.

Father Carton did not mismanage the parish of Tigbauan, Iloilo. The proliferation and growth of different Catholic organizations and movements in the parish are clear manifestations of the excellent management and dynamic leadership of Father Carton. The overflow attendance at all the Masses on Saturdays and Sundays show that he has kept his flock together.

Father Carton has sincerely dedicated his life to the service of the parishioners. His devotion to the Virgin Mother has brought him to all the barangays for many years despite his poor health which required him to undergo a heart bypass operation. He preaches morality, decency and justice. But incorrigible sinners want him ousted.

It is not true that Father Carton is corrupt. The donations, contributions and church collections which he saved for years with the Parish Pastoral Council enabled him to build a big church which can be considered as one of the most beautiful churches in the Philippines today. He has also built an adoration chapel and a very spacious and beautiful convent. Inside the church are big, sturdy and beautiful benches all made of hard wood. Just looking at the expensive structures and estimating their cost, which could run to millions of pesos, would make a request for accounting moot and academic.

One of his detractors is a clown who does not know what he is talking about. The centuries-old bell he is looking for is right there in the belfry. Radyo Bombo representatives went up the belfry and they saw it there, even if it is not being used on account of a defective pendulum. In fact, there are six bells in the Tigbauan Parish Church.

The petition to oust Father Carton is an insult to the intelligence and dignity of every right-thinking Tigbauaño.—**VIOLETA MIRANDA, Tigbauan, Iloilo**

IF you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to Nos. 897-4793, 897-4794, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph

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The WORLD

LUVERNE B. GUECO, EDITOR

Karzai gets down to business

KABUL—The new Cabinet of Afghanistan met for the first time, determined to restore peace to a country shattered by decades of war and newly freed from terrorists.

But Premier Hamid Karzai said a delegation of foreign soldiers—including those from the United States—should remain "for as long as it takes."

"We need to have the instruments of controlling law and order in Afghanistan," he told CNN on Sunday evening. Tribal leaders from southern Afghanistan, he said, have met with him and asked for "the continued presence of the troops."

Sunday's meeting of the 29-member Cabinet was held in a high-ceilinged room on the sprawling grounds of the presidential palace. The scars of 23 years of fighting were evident: Some buildings lay in ruins; others had gaping holes from rocket blasts.

The inauguration of Karzai and his Cabinet on Saturday was a tranquil transfer of power, compared to Afghanistan's violent past. The Cabinet's first meeting a day later was a serious and thoughtful undertaking.

"The Cabinet does not want to make promises just for show. We have to bring real change," Communications Minister Abdul Rahim said. "That means a lot of work in planning, studying and implementing."

Karzai sat at the head of an oval oak table. On his left: One of two female members, Vice Premier Sima Samar, a white scarf casually covering her head.

He began by introducing the members. Some had never met, but were known to each other by reputation.

In the rocket-rutted streets of Kabul, women clutched pale blue burqas against the cold, chanting slogans of hope and peace. It was an unusual show of political involvement by women, reflecting a liberal change from five years of Taliban rule that was ended by a US-led military coalition.

True to his word, Karzai made security a priority, calling for reports from the defense and interior ministers, as well as the intelligence chief known as Engineer Arif—who attended even though he is not a Cabinet member.

Many Afghans said they strongly supported international peacekeepers assigned to protect the government. *AP*

Explosives found in sneakers of passenger

BOSTON—Preliminary FBI tests found explosives in the sneakers that a passenger tried to ignite aboard a Boeing 767 jetliner, and the man was charged with the federal crime of assaulting a flight crew.

His identity remained unclear. He was listed in court papers Sunday as Richard C. Reid, the name on his British passport. French authorities identified him as a Sri Lankan named Tariq Raja. In London, Scotland Yard said they believed the suspect was a British national.

The Federal Aviation Administration on Sunday ordered airlines and airports to guard against passengers boarding planes with explosives hidden in their shoes. Technology that detects traces of explosives on carryon baggage can also be used to check passengers' shoes.

Reid, 28, was charged Sunday in a federal criminal complaint with intimidation or assault of a flight crew causing interference with their duties. He faces a maximum 20 years in prison if convicted.

An initial court appearance was set Monday morning, the FBI said. Reid was being held under constant watch Sunday in a jail in Plymouth, according to Mike Seele, spokesperson for the Plymouth County Sheriff's Department.

Officials at the British consulate in Boston have arranged to meet with Reid before Monday's hearing.

French police opened an investigation Sunday to determine how Reid eluded increased security measures at Charles de Gaulle airport outside Paris, where American Airlines Flight 63 took off Saturday. *AP*

Security tightened at Indon churches

JAKARTA—Thousands of police and other security officials guarded churches across the world's most populous Muslim nation Monday, fearing a repeat of last year's deadly Christmas Eve bombing spree.

Many worshippers said they were too frightened to go to church despite the heavy security presence.

On Dec. 24 last year, bombings in Jakarta and nine other cities and towns killed 19 people and injured dozens.

"More bombs could go off. I'm afraid," said Ida, who like many Indonesians uses only one name.

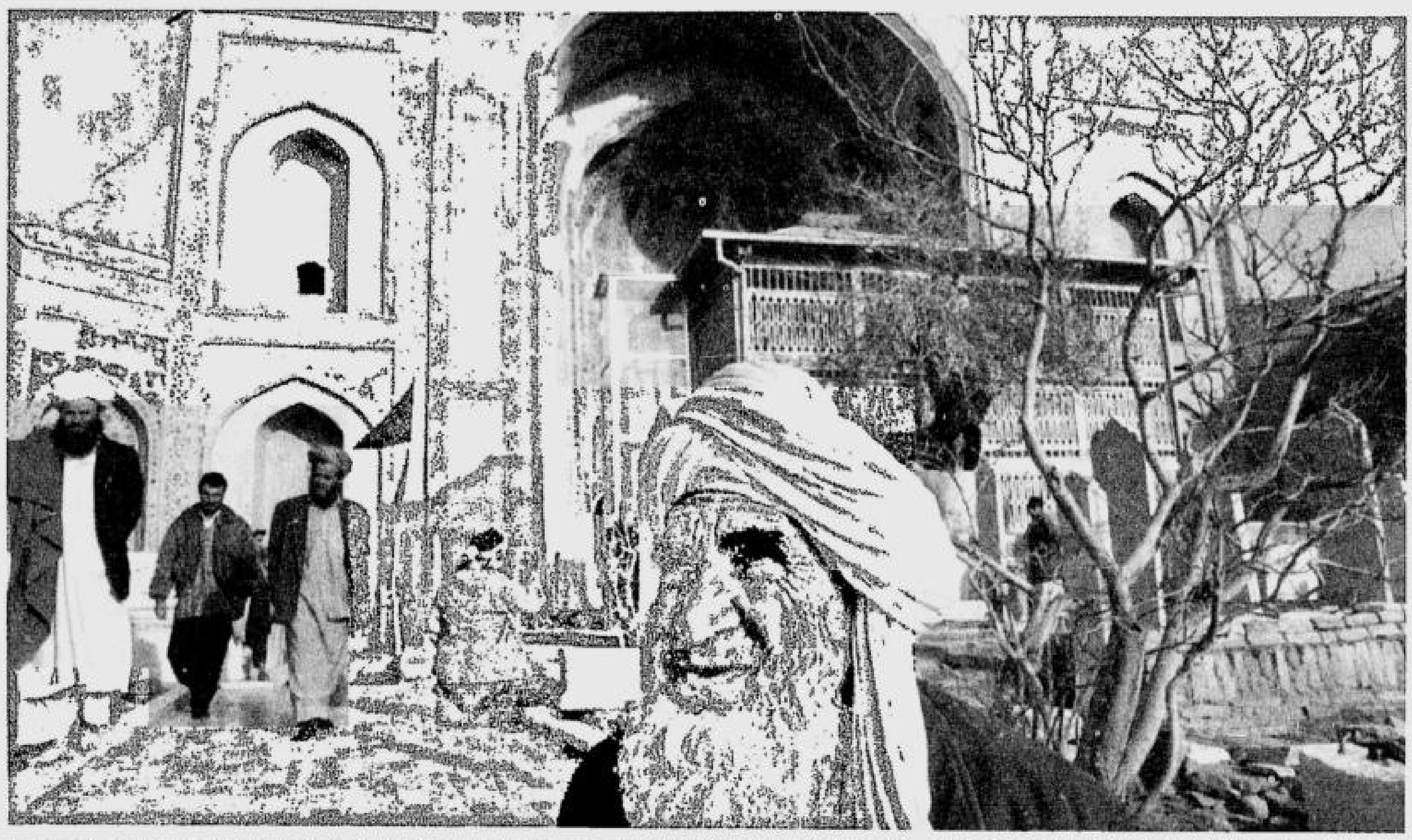
An explosion damaged part of a boarding house in south Jakarta on Monday. No one was injured. Police said it was not clear what caused the blast.

The US Embassy in Jakarta last week advised American citizens to maintain a low profile and warned that a second wave of bombings was possible.

"There are indications that similar incidents could occur again this year," the embassy said in a statement.

However, political analysts doubted there would be fresh violence, saying last year's bombings were intended to destabilize the government of then-President Abdurrahman Wahid, who was trying to push through democratic reforms after three decades of authoritarian rule.

Wahid, who blamed supporters of former dictator Suharto for the attacks, was ousted in July and replaced by Megawati Sukarnoputri, who has backpedaled on reforms. *AP*



A BLIND Afghan beggar tries to get some money as the pilgrims are passing at the tomb of the 10th century poet and mystic Abdullah Ansari, on the edge of Herat in this Dec. 12 file photo. Herat, once called the Florence of Asia for its artistic achievements, has suffered along with the rest of Afghanistan during a generation of conflict. But sentinels from its former grandeur offer some hope that Herat will emerge from the ruins once again. AP

FLORENCE OF ASIA

Herat's ancient glories reflect flicker of hope for the future

HERAT, Afghanistan—The serenity is profound in Heart's 600-year-old central mosque. Exquisite tiles in hues of blue and green adorn archways and minaret spires. The vast marble courtyard shimmers in elegant simplicity.

Then a guard chases away young street beggars, who run through tunnels and emerge in another reality: The spirit-crushing poverty and neglect of what Herat has become.

This ancient oasis, once called the Florence of Asia for its artistic achievements, has suffered along with the rest of Afghanistan during a generation of conflict.

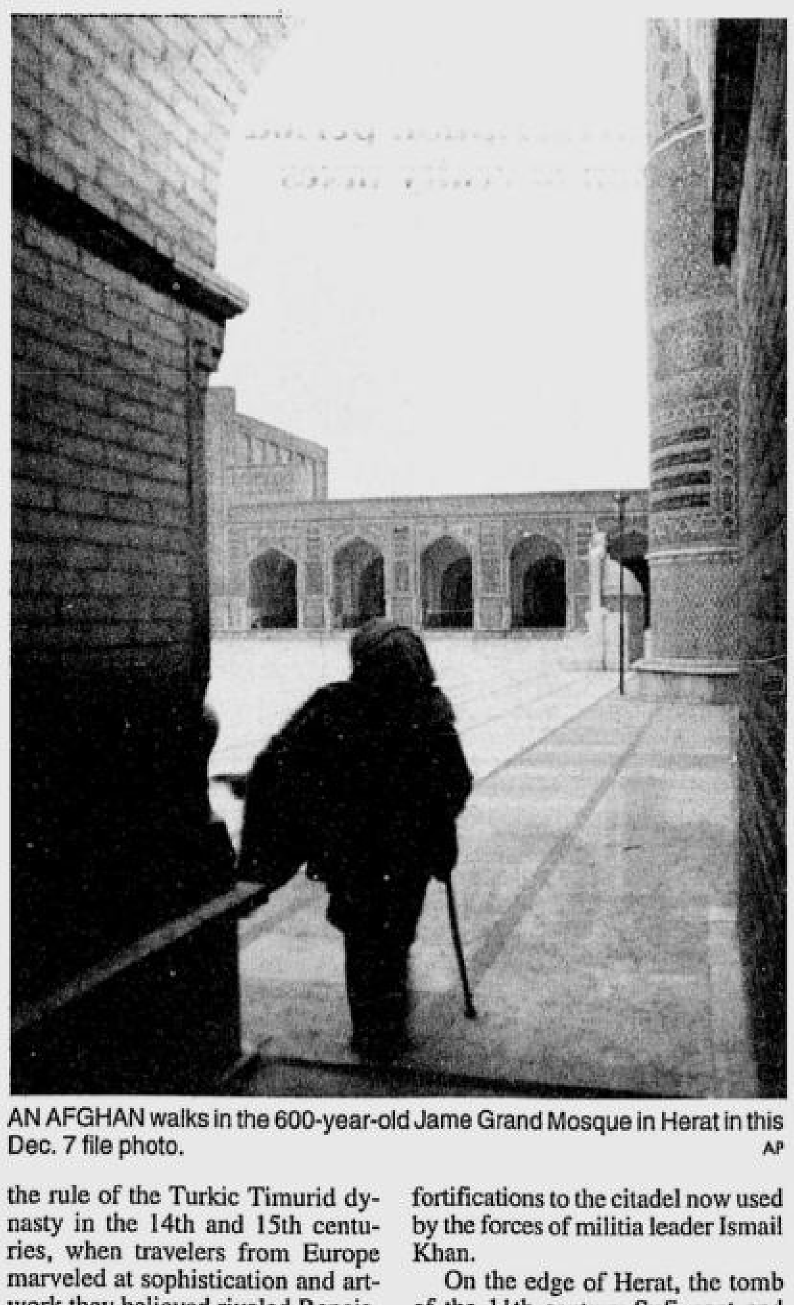
But sentinels from its former grandeur—such as the mosque—still stand guard over the squalor. They offer some hope that Heart will emerge from the ruins once again, as it has done through the millennia, if Afghanistan climbs out of its current isolation and misery.

"We must revive this historical city," said the new mayor, Mohammad Rafiq Mojaddadi, who was elected last month in voting supervised by the local anti-Taliban warlord. "It's our duty to Afghanistan and the world."

But first, there are important matters, such as expert staff and funds to preserve the monuments. City Hall has neither.

"So we must beg," said the mayor. "It is painful, but necessary. We need the help of the international community. Herat is too important to remain forgotten."

The city—in northwestern Afghanistan at a crossroads for trade with Iran and central Asia—has been a prize since Alexander the Great pushed eastward in 330 B.C. Muslims took Herat in the 7th century. Mongol invaders including Genghis Khan moved through Afghanistan in the 13th century but did not topple the Persian-speaking kingdom that made Herat a center for arts and science.



AN AFGHAN walks in the 600-year-old Jame Grand Mosque in Herat in this Dec. 7 file photo. AP

Herat reached its zenith under the rule of the Turkic Timurid dynasty in the 14th and 15th centuries, when travelers from Europe marveled at sophistication and artwork they believed rivaled Renaissance Florence.

Heart's artists developed a famous style of miniature painting that brought students and admirers from around the region.

The work of Timurid builders still dominates Herat: The impressive central mosque and the final fortifications to the citadel now used by the forces of militia leader Ismail Khan.

On the edge of Herat, the tomb of the 11th century Sufi poet and philosopher Abdullah Ansari, had its roof beam snapped recently when it was hit by a load of American humanitarian rations dropped from planes. But at least the tomb is tended by a band of elderly "disciples" who plead for donations.

Other structures sit totally ignored and in real danger of collapse.

Adjacent to a gritty market—with stalls fashioned from old boxcar-size cargo containers—one of the five remaining giant minarets near a Timurid queen's tomb leans precariously close to toppling. The other surviving minarets in the complex, each rising more than 40 meters, flake off more mud bricks after each rainfall.

Other towers succumbed to wars and earthquakes over the centuries, obliterating most of a once-grand complex of schools, courtyards, a musalla (prayer hall) and the tomb of Queen Gawhar Shad herself.

A daughter-in-law of the conqueror Tamerlane, she commissioned her own mausoleum, built in the style of India's Taj Mahal. Today, it is occupied by a flock of birds. The decorative tiles that once covered the dome are broken and piled in a corner.

In the early 16th century, Herat fell to Uzbek forces and finally came under Afghan control in 1749.

Herat paid a heavy toll for its resistance to the 1979-89 Soviet occupation. Many historical buildings were razed, and bombs toppled one of the musalla's minarets.

The Herat broadcasting center struggles with another legacy of the Kremlin-backed governments: a Soviet-made transmission tower so obsolete that no spare parts are available. Television programs, banned by the Taliban, resumed less than 48 hours after they fled the city.

Three hours each of TV and radio—news, interviews and readings from Islam's holy book, the Koran—creak out of studios with homemade video decks and other shoestring equipment.

"We've always considered Herat a city of culture," said broadcasting chief Mohammad Zaer Ershad. "We are aware of many problems. We just hope someday to live up to our great past." *AP*

Pakistan holds 140 al-Qaida prisoners

ISLAMABAD—Pakistani authorities have tightened security around a northern prison where about 140 al-Qaida fighters who fled neighboring Afghanistan are being held, reports said Monday.

Some 700 common criminals have been transferred from the jail at Kohat to other prisons for security reasons, Dawn newspaper said.

The daily said 139 members of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida forces were being held in the jail in Kohat and seven more injured fighters were under guard in a military hospital in the town.

Col. Syed Tariq, the head of the prison in North West Frontier Province, was quoted as saying that "people from all over the world" were among the al-Qaida fighters.

Their fate would be decided by a joint international interrogation team, he added.

The United States has said it wants to question detained followers of alleged terrorist mastermind Bin Laden.

Dawn said more fighters were expected to be shipped to Kohat jail in coming days from the town of Parachinar, near the mountain border with Afghanistan.

Troops were checking all vehicles leaving Kohat amid tight security in the town.

The Statesman newspaper put the number of al-Qaida fighters held at Kohat at 137 and said four more are in hospital. It said large numbers of military and paramilitary forces, backed up by helicopters, were guarding the jail. *AFP*

Number of countries mired in conflicts declining

WASHINGTON—The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks rank as the "most dangerous conflict" of the year in a new report that found nine fewer conflicts around the world than in 2000.

Of 193 countries evaluated by the National Defense Council Foundation, 59 have had serious conflicts this year, from separatist-ethnic violence and political fighting to drug trafficking, religious turmoil and a mutiny by soldiers in Papua New Guinea over army downsizing.

The figure is nine fewer than last year's 68 countries, but still far more than the Cold War average of 35 countries, when the US-Soviet standoff brought the world some stability.

The annual report found no "high-intensity conflicts pitching one state army versus another." Instead, most conflicts were "low-medium intensity and were normally fought between the state and one or more sub-state actors such as a rebel force or a terrorist organization."

The United States gained an unwanted membership on the list after the attacks, the "most dangerous conflict" of the year, due to the possibility of further attacks on American soil.

"There are multiple terrorist groups out there beyond Osama bin Laden," the report says of the man believed responsible for the Sept. 11 airliner hijackings. It noted that terrorists could take advantage of US vulnerabilities by staging, for example, "a catastrophic attack against one of our nation's ports."

Former Army Maj. F. Andy Messing Jr., executive director of the Alexandria, Virginia-based foundation, a nonprofit, right-leaning group, said the reports were done to call attention to dangerous situations worldwide and to help US officials determine how to shape any military response.

"If you don't identify the problem, you can't develop a strategy to address the problem," he said.

Messing, a former Army Special Forces member, said America's military was ill-prepared for the battle against terrorism because it hasn't been reorganized to reflect the end of the Cold War. America should have led with special operations forces, not conventional forces, he said.

Not everyone agrees with the foundation's list, which is based on a country's level of disruption to its socioeconomic, political and security fabric by internal and external conflicts.

For example, the CIA's list counts conflicts, not countries, so one conflict can involve several countries, said spokesperson Mark Mansfield. The agency's number for the year is 30, down one from last year. The specifics are classified, he said. for Defense Information, which has issued reports skeptical of increased military spending, counts major conflicts that have caused at least 1,000 casualties, and separately counts potential hotspots, said chief researcher Ret. Army Col. Daniel Smith.

Major conflicts in 2001 total 38, one down from last year, and more than one-fourth involve Indonesia, India and the Philippines, by Smith's count. *AP*

Japan defends shooting

TOKYO—The Japan Coast Guard defended the weekend shooting of a possible North Korean spy ship, saying Monday that the clash—which left the two dead and 13 missing—unfolded in self-defense.

Releasing night-vision video footage that depicted the mystery ship apparently firing a rocket at Japanese gunboats, coast guard officials said one Japanese ship was hit 132 times by gunfire during the encounter.

"We fired shots in legitimate self-defense, and I think we took appropriate actions," said Tetsuo Yokoyama, operations chief for the Maritime Safety Agency.

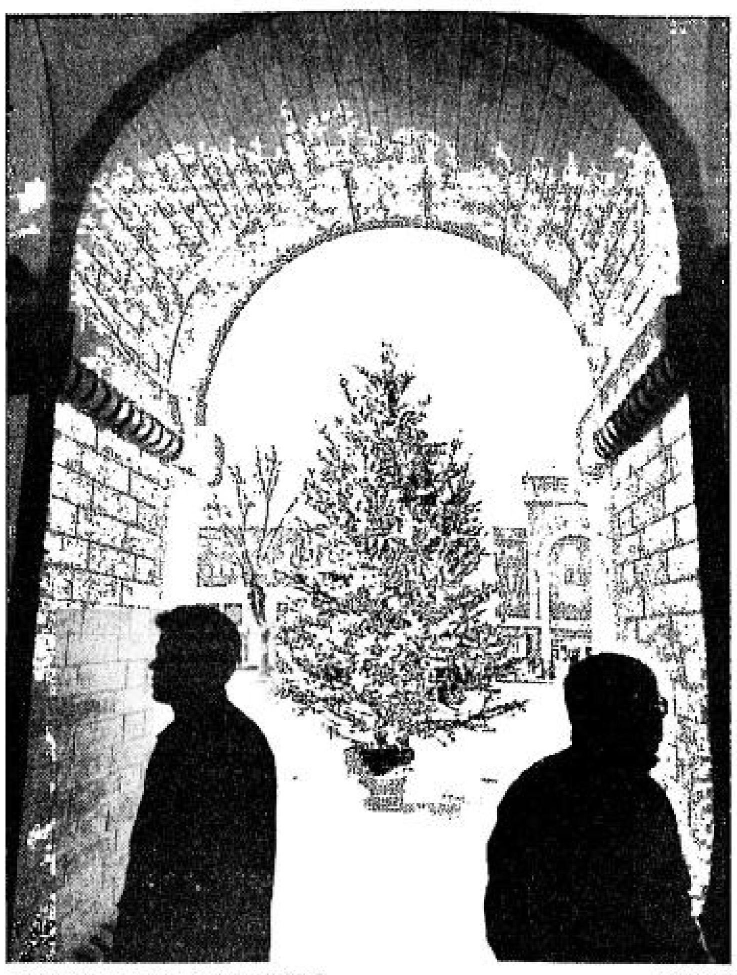
Masao Kurusu, captain of the Amami, said the unidentified trawler opened fire first, after the Amami and two other Japanese ships surrounded it late Saturday night.

The boat foundered within minutes of the Japanese returning fire, but it was unclear whether it was sunk by gunfire or scuttled by its crew.

Two of its estimated 15 crewmembers were found dead, with the rest still missing Monday. Two Japanese sailors were also injured in the firefight.

The bullet-riddled Amami returned to a southern Japanese port Monday, its bridge windows shattered. Other ships involved in the chase were expected back later in the day.

Japanese ships began a six-hour chase for the mysterious trawler when it ignored orders to stop for inspection off the Japanese coast. The ship fled toward China and eventually sank in the East China Sea just outside Chinese territorial waters. *AP*



CHRISTMAS IN CHINA REUTERS

Chinese visitors walk through an archway at the 300-year-old St. Joseph's Cathedral against a backdrop of a Christmas tree in central Beijing on Dec. 24 Christmas, not traditionally celebrated in China, is gaining popularity among Chinese youths who are increasingly influenced by Western culture.

Consumer spending in US tempered

NEW YORK—On what was supposed to be the biggest shopping weekend of the holiday season, consumers flocked to the nation's stores but remained frugal, despite heavy discounting and advertising blitzes.

The restrained spending in the final stretch before Christmas cast a further pall on the shopping season, already expected to be the worst in at least a decade.

"This is supposed to be the ultimate peak Christmas shopping weekend," said C. Britt Beemer, chairman of America's Research Group, in Charleston, South Carolina. "I think it was even softer than Thanksgiving weekend."

Instead of the typical surge on the final weekend of the holiday shopping season, traffic and sales were up only slightly from the previous weekend, analysts said, down from the same time a year ago.

Holiday sales and profits for many merchants may end up coming in below already modest expectations, said Jeff Feiner, managing director of Lehman Brothers. That may drag retailers' profits down as much as 5 percent to 10 percent.

"The profit picture looks a lot worse. Traffic was still off for the most important weekend before Christmas, even with the rampant discounts," Feiner said.

This weekend's disappointing turnout is the latest blow to retailers, which suffered sluggish sales since the shopping season began the day after Thanksgiving.

Consumer electronics like game consoles and DVD players were the only bright spots, along with kitchenware and toys like Harry Potter products. Value-oriented chains, particularly Wal-Mart Stores Inc., fared better than department stores and specialty apparel stores.

The holiday season had five full weekends and was 32 days long, a day longer than 2000. Many shoppers held back, however, because of worries about job security, or lingering concerns about the terrorist attacks.

Last year, a record 30.9 percent of all holiday sales came in the final seven days before Christmas, according to the International Council of Shopping Centers. The share is expected to drop to about 20 percent.

"This Christmas is more about people than buying gifts," Beemer said.

Marilyn Villano, 48, of Auburn, New York, used to procrastinate when it came to buying holiday gifts. This year, she finished shopping by Dec. 10.

"I just wanted to spend more time with my children and grandchildren," she said.

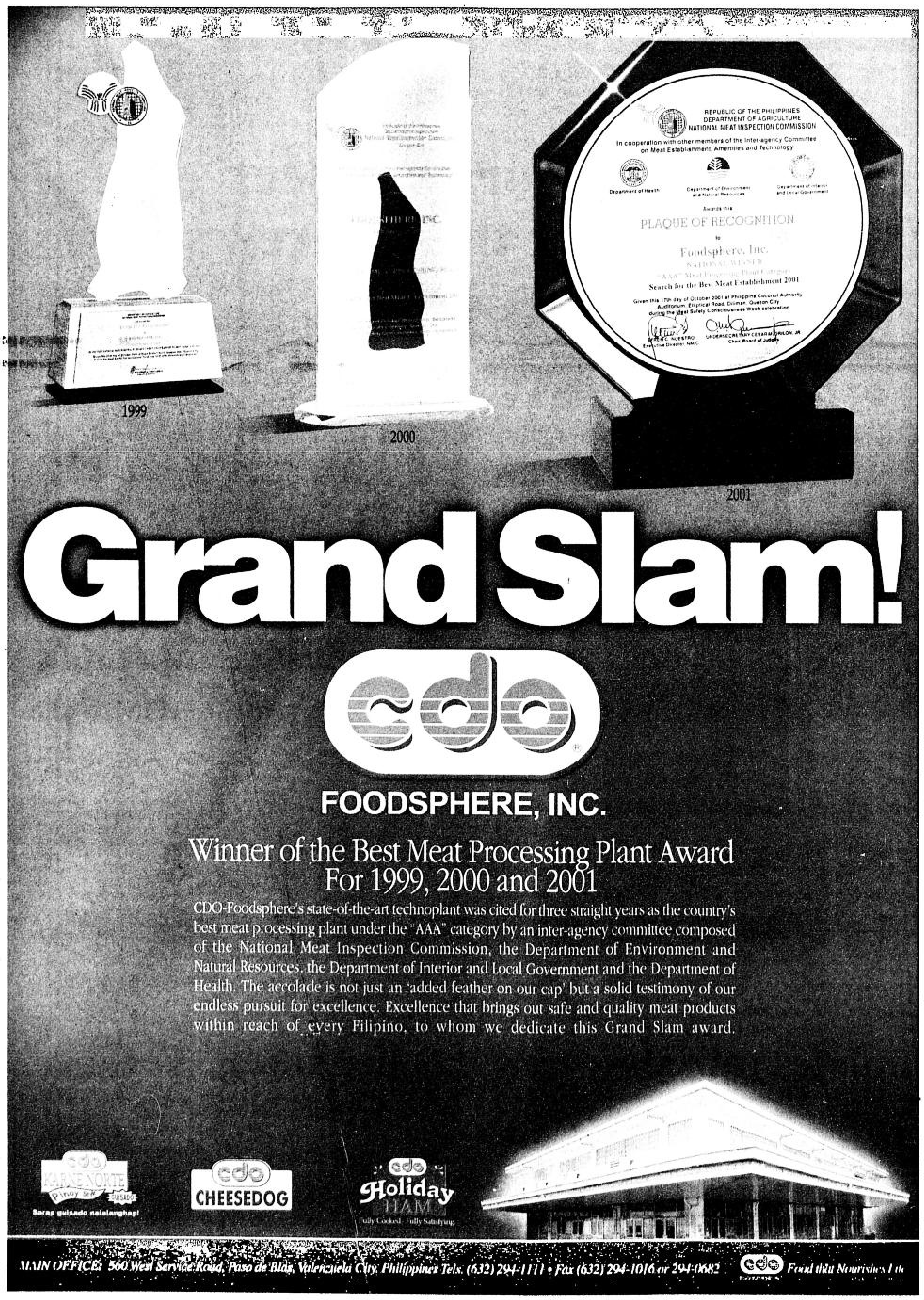
Many merchants, were counting on procrastinators, including Kmart Corp., which kept its stores' doors open straight from 6 a.m. Thursday through 8 p.m. Christmas Eve.

Bloomingdale's sent out an extra catalog to more than 1 million homes last week, hoping to grab last-minute shoppers.

Bloomingdale's chair Michael Gould said he was pleased with the overall weekend's sales receipts, though revenues at its New York store were below expected. Overall, holiday sales should be just slightly above modest goals, he said.

The prospect of deep-bargains made Diane Shaw, 40, of Topeka, Kansas, hold off until the last minute.

"The things in the stores now are cheaper than they were in the ads two or three weeks ago," Shaw said as she shopped at a Kansas City, Missouri, mall. *AP*



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'Eternal Debt' board game flies off shelves

BUENOS AIRES—This Christmas, many Argentines will rise to a challenge written on the box of a best-selling board game "Deuda Eterna," or Eternal Debt: "Do you dare defeat the IMF?"

As Argentina's new, interim government declared Sunday it was halting payment on the country's massive foreign debt, Nelson Rodriquez rang up the till at the Toy Supermarket in Buenos Aires' Cavallito District. He'd just sold the next-to-last Eternal Debt game in his stock.

"I didn't dare put it in the window, people would have thrown a brick through," he said. "They hate those words."

In Spanish, the game's title is a wordplay on "deuda externa," or foreign debt.

For years, Argentina has dug itself deeper into debt on international markets, while maintaining a top-heavy government bureaucracy despite privatizing much of the country's industry.

When a bitter recession hit nearly four years ago, this once-prosperous country of 36 million found it increasingly difficult to keep up with payments and fell back on the International Monetary Fund.

In return for throwing a lifeline, the Fund made its customary recommendations: tighten fiscal policy and continue liberalizing trade and investment.

But at the time, tighter fiscal policy only succeeded in pushing South America's second-largest economy deeper into the slump.

So who's to blame? Argentina or the IMF?

"I think the way of linking the payments to austerity policy was not correct," said Oscar Liberman, president of a local think tank, Fundacion Mercado. "I also think there were people in the Fund who didn't really understand Argentina's situation."

But he said the IMF cannot be blamed for the Argentine crisis because the government "never presented the Fund with an alternative plan."

"When Argentina had to impose austerity, it always went for the easy way out," Liberman said—cutting lower-scale state workers' salaries and pensions rather than slashing its bloated, profligate government.

That finally backfired on the increasingly unpopular government of former President Fernando de la Rua last week, when Argentines' patience with his and the IMF's austerity policies snapped.

Thousands poured onto the streets, engulfing the country in its worst frenzy of looting and rioting in a decade. After two days, de la Rua was forced to step down.

When the new interim President Adolfo Rodriguez Saa took office Sunday, one of his first measures was to suspend foreign debt payments. The announcement got him a raucous standing ovation in Congress. *AP*

Australia goes on alert over terrorist threat

CANBERRA—The government Monday increased security alert levels and issued a general warning after obtaining information of a possible terrorist threat to US or British interests in Australia.

"The federal government has received information to suggest there may be a potential terrorist threat in Australia possibly to United States and United Kingdom interests," Attorney General Daryl Williams said in a statement.

Williams said the information was unsubstantiated and not specific to any type of threat or location, but was of sufficient credibility to be taken seriously.

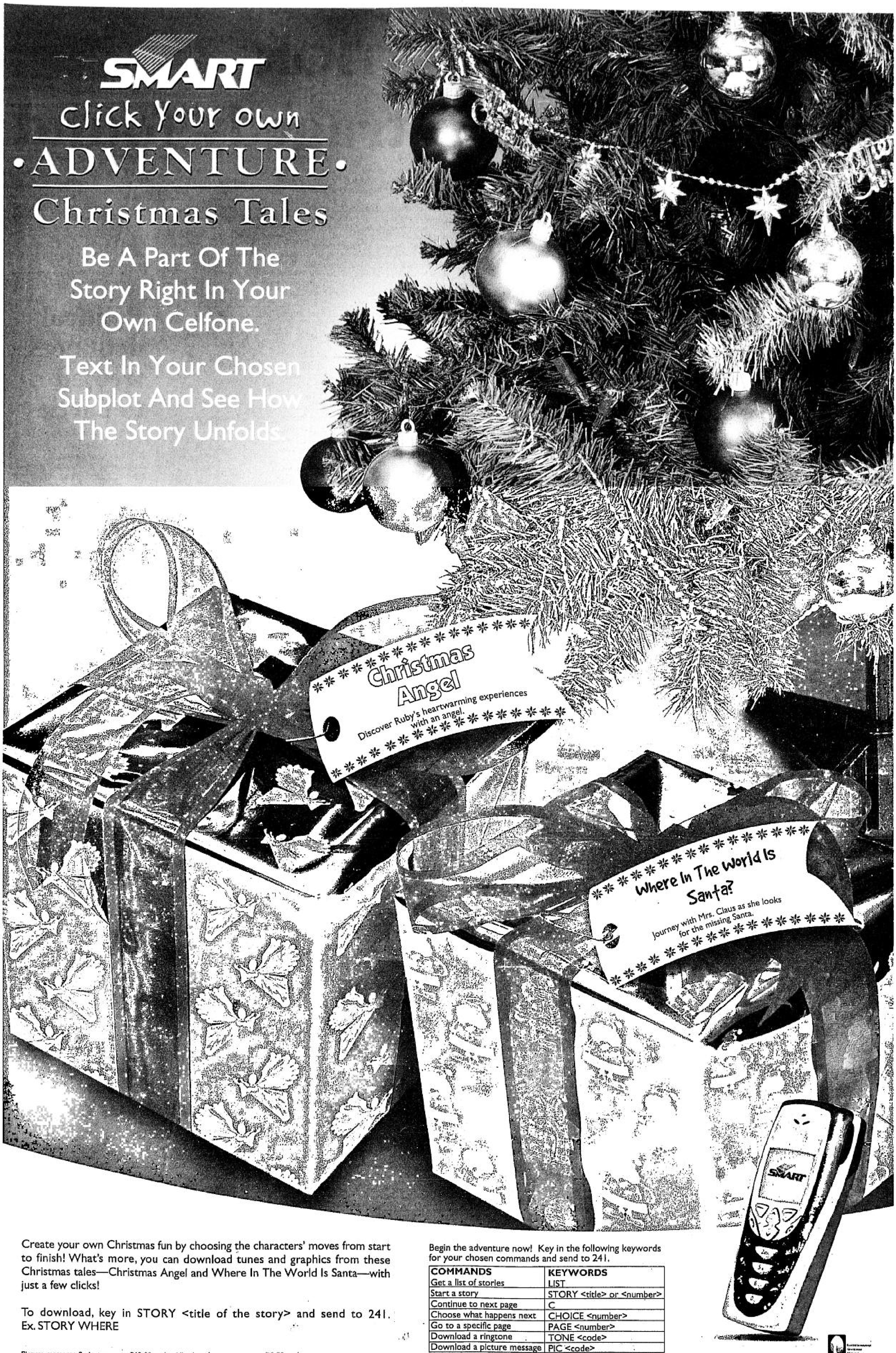
"The government is sufficiently concerned about the potential threat that we have upgraded Australia's security alert levels. We are treating the information seriously," Williams said.

"We have further strengthened aviation security, and security at key sites is also being reviewed."

He said all federal, state and territory law enforcement, security and intelligence agencies had been advised of the possible threat and were cooperating with their international counterparts to investigate the information and any unusual activity.

Williams gave no further details or any indication of the source of the information.

"The federal government will continue to keep Australians informed as necessary," the statement concluded. Williams' office said he would hold a press conference later Monday. *AP*



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Bodies of 2 in sea tragedy found

By **Jhunnex Napallacan**
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Rescuers found on Sunday the bodies of a three-year-old girl and a woman who had been declared missing after their service boat capsized in waters off Barangay Hagnaya, San Remegio town, about 109 kilometers northwest of this city.

Ulymar Booc, 3, of Lawis, Bantayan Island and Bendita de la Rosa, 22, were found floating near the area where the service boat of Island Express 5 overturned after hitting the outrigger of a fishing boat, about 50 meters from the Hagnaya port.

This brought to nine the number of passengers who drowned in the sea tragedy, which occurred just three days before Christmas.

Petty Officer 1 Vicente Molinas of the Cebu Coast Guard Station said rescuers were still searching for the other missing passenger identified as Doromal Matabong, 33, of Cadiz City.

Based on a report reaching the Cebu Coast Guard Station, Booc, who was travelling with her mother Marlyn, was found floating about 5:30 a.m. on Sunday by a village official of the adjacent Barangay Punta. Marlyn was among the survivors.

About three hours later, Coast Guard divers recovered the body of De la Rosa some 50 meters from where the accident happened.

The bodies were already brought to their respective homes.

Alex Tan, owner of Island Shipping Company, said that aside from paying all the expenses including the burial, the families of the victims would receive P100,000 each from the company's insurer after the claims had been processed.

He said he also shouldered the medical expenses of at least 10 passengers who were treated in a hospital in nearby Bogo town.

Commodore Herby Escotin, commander of the Coast Guard District Central and Eastern Visayas office, had already ordered an investigation of the tragedy.

Molinas said Escotin directed Petty Officer 2 Candelario Beduya to conduct to an investigation in San Remegio.

Beduya was required to submit the results of his investigation, which would be made basis to start a formal investigation by the Special Board of Marine Inquiry.

As of Sunday afternoon, Beduya was still in San Remegio. He was expected to meet Severino Bacunawa and Sixto Espina, skippers of the service boat and the fishing boat.

In his marine protest, Bacunawa blamed Espina for the tragedy, saying he anchored his fishing boat directly on the path of the service boat.

Tan, in a separate interview, stood by Bacunawa's claim. "We will have to face them because it was their fault," he said.

The MV Island Express 5 from Sta. Fe town failed to dock at the Hagnaya port Saturday morning. Instead, it anchored about 150 meters from the port while its 170 passengers were told that a service boat would take them to the port.

The service boat rammed into the outrigger of a fishing boat, causing it to capsize.

Christmas gift to labor: ₱11 hike in allowance

TACLOBAN CITY—The Regional Tripartite Wage and Productivity Board in Eastern Visayas (RTWPB-8) has approved an additional P11 in the cost of living allowance (Cola) of workers in the private sector.

The Associated Labor Union-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (ALU-TUCP) was expected to protest because the amount approved by the board was way below its demand for a P78 across-the-board increase.

Wage Order No. 10 granted the demand of the Leyte Chamber of Commerce and Industry that at least P10 in Cola be given to workers instead of an increase in minimum wages.

"We know the workers will get disappointed with our decision. Hopefully, they will understand us. But that is (what) the board feels (is) the most appropriate at the moment," said wage board secretary Florencio Aguilos.

He said the wage board issued the wage order after holding a marathon deliberation last Wednesday, which lasted for more than three hours.

Under the new wage order, the P10 Cola will be given to workers as "add-on" to their daily minimum wage.

The order will take effect 15 days after its publication in a region-wide newspaper. The wage board, however, has yet to schedule its publication.

Last September, the Ormoc City-based labor group ALU-TUCP submitted a petition to the wage board, seeking a P78 across-the-board wage hike because the "ideal wage" in the region was P255.

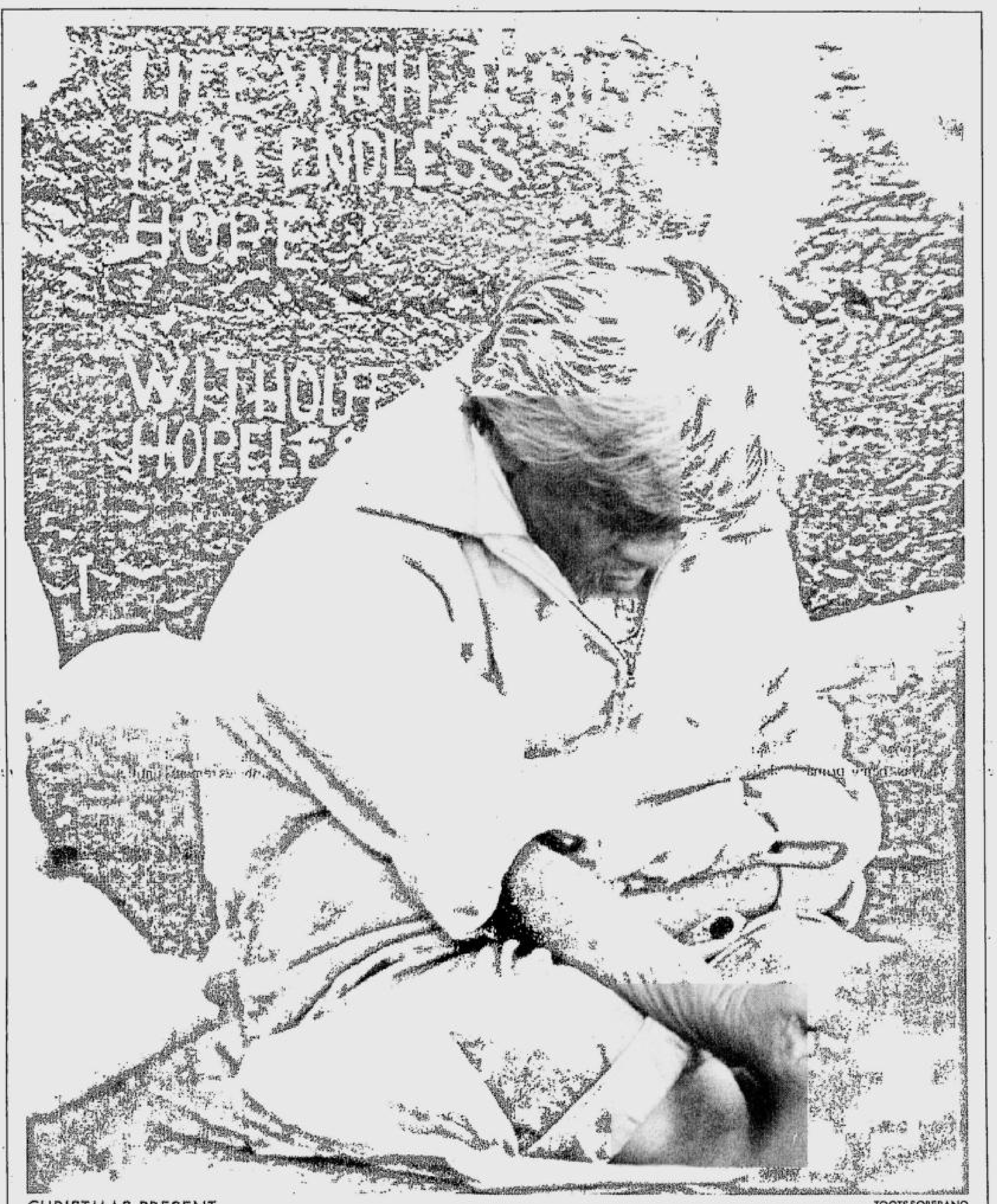
Currently, non-agricultural workers in Leyte receive a daily minimum wage of P177 and P173 for workers in other areas in the region. The daily minimum wage for agricultural workers in Leyte is pegged at P158 and P154 for the other areas.

The LCCI, an organization of 220 small and medium enterprises in Leyte, opposed the petition, saying it would be impossible for the employer sector to grant a wage hike because of the prevailing economic slump.

Instead, the group offered P10 in Cola "as a soft relief" for workers.

Aguilos denied speculation that the LCCI had influenced the wage board's decision. He said in reaching the decision, the wage board considered the prevailing economic crunch but did not neglect the workers' clamor for an increase.

"The point is if we mandate for a wage increase, this will entail additional costs on the part of management," he said.
Joey A. Gabieta PDI Visayas Bureau



TOOTS SOBERANO

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
The days pass so slowly by and don't seem to bring change for this beggar who is at his usual spot on a Baguio City street, Christmas or not. A life of poverty has become his Christmas past and present and is likely to be his Christmas future.

Political detainees treated to parties

MATI, Davao Oriental—Human rights advocates led by Karapatan-Mindanao on Wednesday held "simultaneous" Christmas parties in at least 11 detention and rehabilitation centers in Southern Mindanao.

Karapatan said that at least 73 "political prisoners" languishing in jails all over the region ate food for the holidays and listened to Christmas carols.

Thirty-six of those treated to a party were detained at the Davao Oriental provincial jail here.

Karapatan said most of the detainees here are young Moro fishermen suspected of being Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels.

Bishop Felixberto Calang, of the Philippine Independent Church and Karapatan chair, said the parties were aimed at cheering up the spirits of the political prisoners, who continue to be separated by iron bars from their families.

"This Christmas, 73 political prisoners in Southern Mindanao will continue to be separated from their families and relatives as they languish in eleven detention and rehabilitation centers in the region," Calang said.

In one of the parties held at the provincial jail here, human rights advocates also distributed medicines.

"Contrary to what (President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo) promised earlier, only half of the more than 150 political prisoners have so far been released from jail," Alvin Luque of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan said.

Luque said that instead of working for the release of inmates detained because of their political beliefs, the government has continued to take in more prisoners.

"The number of political prisoners under the Macapagal administration is significantly increasing because of the continued anti-insurgency campaign of the government which victimizes innocent and helpless civilians. Many of them are lowly farmers," he said.

Luque said human rights advocates have urged the Macapagal administration to unconditionally release all the political prisoners as part of a confidence-building measure.

"(And) so that they may (also) spend Christmas with their families and relatives," he said. *Ferdinand O. Zuasola, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Crisis felt as Ecija folk miss giveaways

By **Anselmo Roque**
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CABANATUAN CITY—Nueva Ecija residents are sorely missing the giveaways and the usual generosity of big department stores, politicians and rich families during the Christmas season this year.

"Even calendars are not given out," said Joselito Verde, who recently bought construction materials from a hardware store here. "In the past, aside from calendars, they also gave out T-shirts."

Cielo Valino of Barangay Aduas here also noted that grocery stores that used to lavish their customers with giveaways like coin purses, calendars, small bags, towels, key chains and other items, seemed to be "stingy" these days.

She understood this to be a result of the economic crisis gripping the country and other parts of the world.

"They said business has been bad these days. They said they might give away Christmas tokens next year when sales begin to perk up," Valino, who quoted storeowners as saying, told the INQUIRER.

Carolers also noted that even rich families were giving lesser amounts.

A check with some printing offices showed that big establishments and offices have placed fewer orders for company calendars this year.

Helen Magpayo, a supervisor of a printing press here, said their customers ordered only 3,000 calendars this year compared to 8,000 calendars they ordered last year.

A grocery store owner, who used to order 200 calendars every year, ordered only 100 pieces this year, Magpayo said.

A reason, she said, could be the higher cost of calendars because of the rising prices of materials.

One big letdown about the slump in sales in big stores and establishments was the low buying prices of palay offered by traders. Prices ranged from P6 to P7 a kilo.

Farmers in Nueva Ecija, a province largely dependent on farming, have less money to spend this year because of low prices for their crops.

The government's buying price was P9 a kilo but not all farmers could sell their produce to the National Food Authority because of its strict requirements.

Bright lights change a village forever

By **Debra Jane Magallon**
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—All it took was a single set of lights to brighten the whole village.

As a Christmas project, the newly-elected officers of the Mountain View Quiot Residence Association planned to donate Christmas lights to their less fortunate neighbors. They also wanted to put up Christmas lights in some vacant lots found in their village.

Knowing that these were hard times with the economy in crisis, the last thing on their minds was to put up one spectacular display of Christmas lights.

But that was not how it turned out. Now, Mountain View Village is one merry community dressed up with over P100, 000 worth of Christmas lights.

"Some people would joke that we were not affected with the crisis here. But we are, we just won't let the crisis stop us from celebrating Christmas," said Danny Teves, board member of the homeowners' association.

Mountain View is home to at least 105 families. Divided into four streets, this highland neighborhood has long contented itself being part of Barangay Quiot, often regarded as Cebu's little Baguio because the temperature here would drop often.

"When we started to put up the lights, everybody else followed suit," said Filemon Yting II, president of the association.

Donations

Since mid-November, the officers started to ask for donations. Before the month ended, almost every home already had Christmas lights on their walls and gates.

On some of the houses' roof tops, there were lights shaped into stars or angels, and on some of the walls, there were those formed into Christmas trees or Santa Clauses riding in his sleigh with the reindeers.

Outside the homes, lights were wrapped around trees and bushes.

As evening breaks, some light posts in the village will be put off, and only the Christmas lights stay on, giving it a more dramatic effect. Walking past all the glittering lights, one could not help but feel the rush of Christmas in the air.

Alex Martinez, who has resided all 35 years of his life in the village, headed a group of young men who helped put up the Christmas lights. He also volunteered to take care of the maintenance of the lights free of charge.

In the evening, he would do the rounds to check every corner in the neighborhood to see if there were some lights needed to be repaired.

As for the electric bill, everybody in the village chips in to pay for it.

After everything was done and the lights give out a dreamy sight, people from neighboring sitios in their barangays started to come by their village to admire such a pretty sight.

Task

The Christmas lights in different colors and shapes also attracted people from different areas of the city who visit in throngs. Even some of the local city councilors and the city mayor visited Mountain View.

Beaming with pride, Filemon remarked "in my 20 years of stay in this village, it is just now that I saw something like this."

Reynaldo Camotes, a resident of the place for six years already, said it is their pride and pleasure to accept visitors into their village and appreciate what they did.

"All those wonderful remarks from the people made us feel that we were compensated for what we did," Reynaldo said.

However, all these were just the tip of the iceberg, if you are going to think about all the wonderful things that happened in this community.

What was so important for them was that, for the first time, they became united for a good cause.

This project has also brought the homeowners' families close to each other.

According to Danny, the people here don't usually go out at night. "They just stay in their homes," he added.

Now, with all the Christmas lights all over their neighborhood, they choose more to go out and watch the lights.

Some of the young people would stay in one corner and sing Christmas carols, others go out in groups and take a stroll around the village as a sort of "therapy."

Well, considering the countless upheavals that turned our country upside-down and all the bad news you see on TV, it is really an effective antidote to walk the whole stretch of the neighborhood.

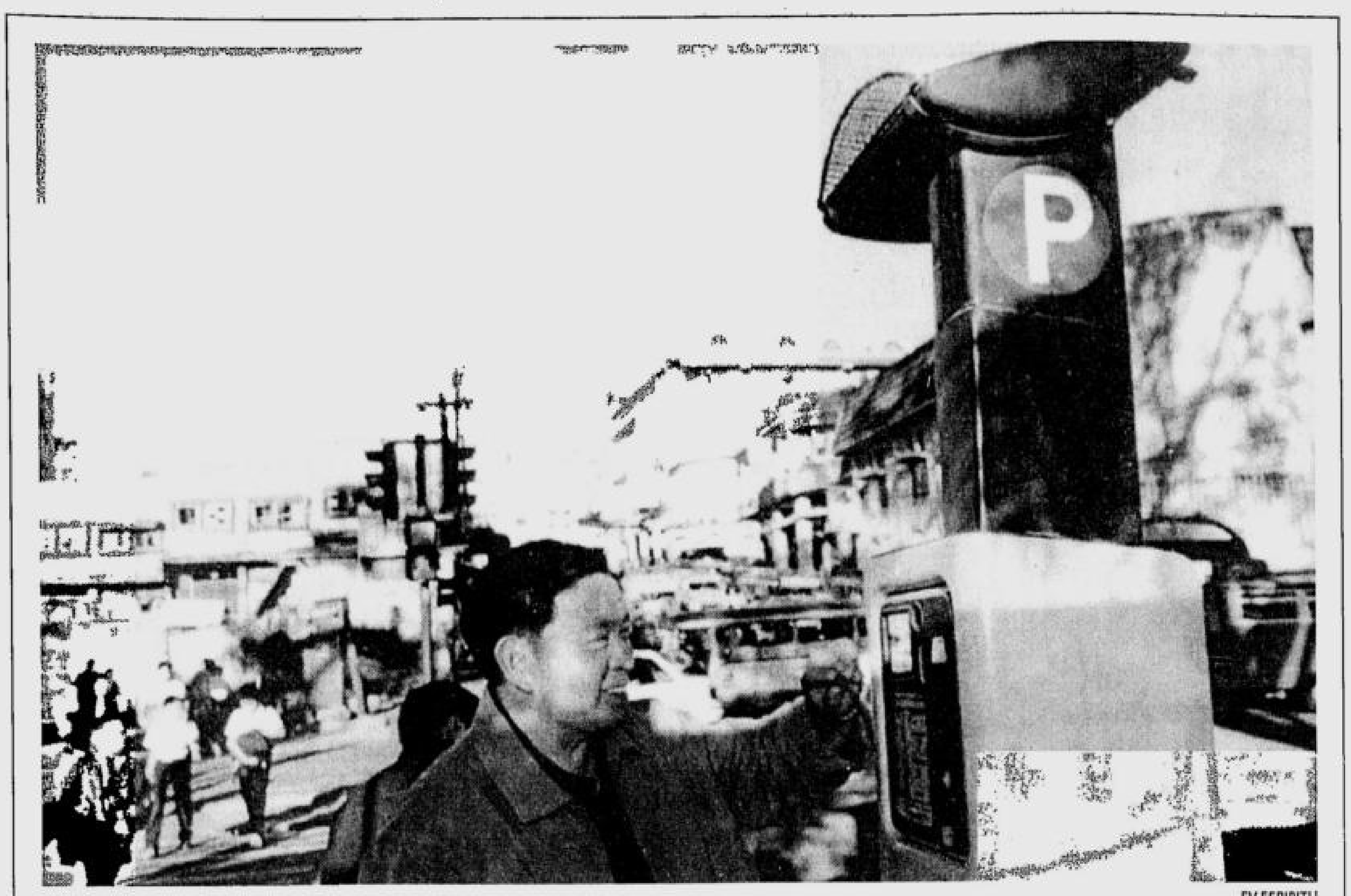
"Beautiful things like these take your worries away. It makes you feel lighter," Filemon commented.

By next year, the association is planning to improve their decorations as they agreed to make this an annual project.

They were also thinking of putting up a carnival complete with rides and booths.

But the biggest challenge they face is to encourage the people from all the 28 sitios in their barangay to do the same.

"If there is a need for us to go house to house, we will do it just so our neighbors from the different sitios will also feel the joy and pride we are feeling," said Danny.



EV ESPIRITU

ROAD REVENUE

The growing number of vehicles in Baguio City has transformed the summer capital's streets into a network of parking areas. The city government found this a good way to fatten its coffers—set up pay parking toll machines on key streets.

Give us land, Mt. Pinatubo victims appeal

BAMBAN, Tarlac—-Only a presidential proclamation declaring Dapdap here as a resettlement site is needed for 16,356 Mt. Pinatubo settlers to start the processing of titles to their lands and houses.

The proclamation, which has been awaited by residents since 1992 when the site was developed, is the Christmas gift the residents are expecting from President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Expressing this wish by the Dapdap Homeowners' Association, Tarlac Rep. Jesli Lapus asked the President to issue the proclamation at least by January next year.

"It is ironic that the Dapdap resettlement, unlike the other Mt. Pinatubo resettlements in Pampanga, Tarlac and Zambales, has not yet been proclaimed by the President as a resettlement after all this time," Lapus wrote to Ms Macapagal on Dec. 11.

Reports from the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, which Ms Macapagal asked to continue the unfinished tasks of the defunct Mount Pinatubo Commission, showed that Dapdap, out of 14 lowland resettlement sites, has not yet been proclaimed.

Proclamation

Without a presidential proclamation, public domains converted into resettlement sites cannot be classified as alienable and disposable and their titles would be unavailable for distribution to settlers.

HDUCC reports showed that seven of the resettlement sites (Bulaon, Mawaque, Madapdap, EPZA, Camachile, Sta. Lucia—all in Pampanga) had been bought by the government and their ownership transferred to the MPC. Land titles are available for distribution.

Documentation is ongoing for the National Housing Authority-MPC site, also a purchased property in Pampanga.

The expropriated land in Barangay Taugtog in Botolan, Zambales remains untitled.

Transfer documents for donated lands in Pandacaqui and Porac, both in Pampanga, had been completed.

Resettlement sites at Balaybay in Zambales; O'Donnel in Tarlac; and Floridablanca in Pampanga have been covered by Presidential Proclamation Nos. 40, 813 and 811, respectively.

The resettlement sites comprised 1,890.89 hectares, the third biggest of which is in Dapdap after those in Balaybay and O'Donnel.

Lapus said Dapdap is one of the sites first developed by the government in 1992.

Wiped out

Thirteen out of 15 Bamban villages had been wiped out by lahar from the Sacobia-Bamban River and immediately relocated to Dapdap in Barangay Anupul here.

"(It is) the home of practically 70 percent of the town's population," he said.

The 150-hectare resettlement is located in a rolling and hilly terrain. More than 3,500 houses now stand on 43 hectares in Dapdap.

The site has 34 kilometers of road, a municipal building, fire and police stations, a hospital, a morgue, a gymnasium, day care centers, primary and secondary school buildings, a public market and productivity centers, MPC reports showed.

The MPC said employment is one of the "glaring needs" in the resettlement site where 35 percent of the settlers are farmers who lost their lands during the 1991 eruptions.

Lapus told the President that the requirements for proclamation, mainly documentation, have been completed.

Housing Secretary Michael Defensor, according to Lapus, has "promptly advised" the scheduling of the signing of the proclamation.

"It's the best Christmas gift we could have," Lapus said, noting that the settlers were "really looking forward" to the proclamation of Dapdap. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

LOW PAY

Agriculturists protest neglect by gov't

By Ma. Diosa Labiste
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY–They are said to be one at the forefront of the government's march to attain food sufficiency but local agriculturists complain of low salary.

During the first Iloilo government agriculturists' convention here on Dec. 12, some 500 agriculturists and technicians devolved in the 42 towns and two cities of Iloilo lamented over their low pay despite their contribution to the bureaucracy.

Rosario Reyes, president of the Devolved Agriculturists of the Philippines (DAP)-Western Visayas chapter, said many agricultural technicians get as low as P5,167 a month from the municipal government.

Under the Salary Standardization Act, they are supposed to get 9,000 pesos a month.

A year after the passage of the Local Government Code in 1991, Iloilo province started paying for the salaries of some 400 agriculturists and farm technicians formerly under the Department of Agriculture.

Next to some 1,000 health workers, the agriculture personnel were the biggest group to be devolved to Iloilo province in 1992.

Western Visayas, being primarily agricultural, has among the biggest number of devolved agriculture personnel in the country, said Reyes. The region comprises the provinces of Iloilo, Aklan, Antique, Guimaras, Capiz and Negros Occidental.

Ildefonso Toledo, the newly-elected president of the

Iloilo Agricultural Employees Association (IAEA), said the setup was demoralizing because many of them were sent to fifth and sixth class towns.

Some towns have no funds for per diems that many agriculturists cannot visit the barangays or attend seminars to improve their skills. Some mayors even regarded them as a drain to the towns' coffers.

To help the towns, the provincial government has been paying the salaries of a number of agricultural technicians.

The Salary Standardization Act exempts local government units (LGUs) from complying with the mandated salary increases if these are beyond their capacity.

The law only urges them to implement pay hikes whenever there are funds available.

Many LGUs are only relying on the Internal Revenue Allocation, which is their share of taxes from the national government, and have no other sources of revenues.

AFP chief vows to honor truce with NPA rebels

CAMP MELCHOR DELA CRUZ, Isabela—Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Diomedio Villanueva promised to uphold the government's ceasefire with the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army, this Christmas season.

Villanueva issued the assurance amid the reported truce violations by the CPP-NPA in the Visayas this week.

"We will (make sure) that we will not violate our own declared ceasefire even if (the NPA rebels) are violating their own ceasefire," Villanueva told reporters here on Saturday.

Villanueva said the reported ceasefire violation in Igbaras, Iloilo on Dec. 19 was an example "of how sincere the rebels are in keeping their word with their ceasefire."

He was referring to the killing of Alberto Alfaro Jr., 48, and Domingo Eucare, 45, said to be military informers in Barangay Tabiac in Igbaras, Iloilo on Wednesday.

Alfaro and Eucare were shot and killed by suspected members of the NPA's Napoleon Tumagtag Command.

The ceasefire agreement between the government and CPP-NPA and the National Democratic Front started on Dec. 15 and will end on Jan. 2.

"The most that we could do right now is to raise a protest (over the killing of Alfaro and Eucare)," he said.

Villanueva said the AFP would remain on red alert to thwart possible rebel attacks before the NPA's commemoration of its founding anniversary on Dec. 26.

Villanueva visited this camp on Saturday and gave out cash and other gifts to soldiers of the Army's 5th Infantry Division based here.

"I would like to play Santa Claus for one last time," Villanueva, who will be retiring next year, said after handing out P300,000 and 200 sacks of rice to soldiers. *Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon, Esatern Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Hi 31 Lo 22°
Baguio	Mostly Cloudy	Hi 21° Lo 13°
Tuguegarao	Mostly Cloudy	Hi 28° Lo 17°
Laoag	Mostly Cloudy	Hi 28° Lo 21°
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 20°
Tagaytay	Mostly Cloudy	Hi 29° Lo 18°
Legazpi	Mostly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 23°
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 20°
Bacolod	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 23°
Roxas	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 25°
Cebu	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 23°
Tacloban	Mostly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 24°
Gen. Santos	Mostly Cloudy	Hi 33° Lo 24°
Zamboanga	Mostly Cloudy	Hi 32° Lo 23°
Cagayan de Oro	Mostly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 22°
Davao	Mostly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 23°

Compiled by: Chona Galang, PDI Research/12/25/01

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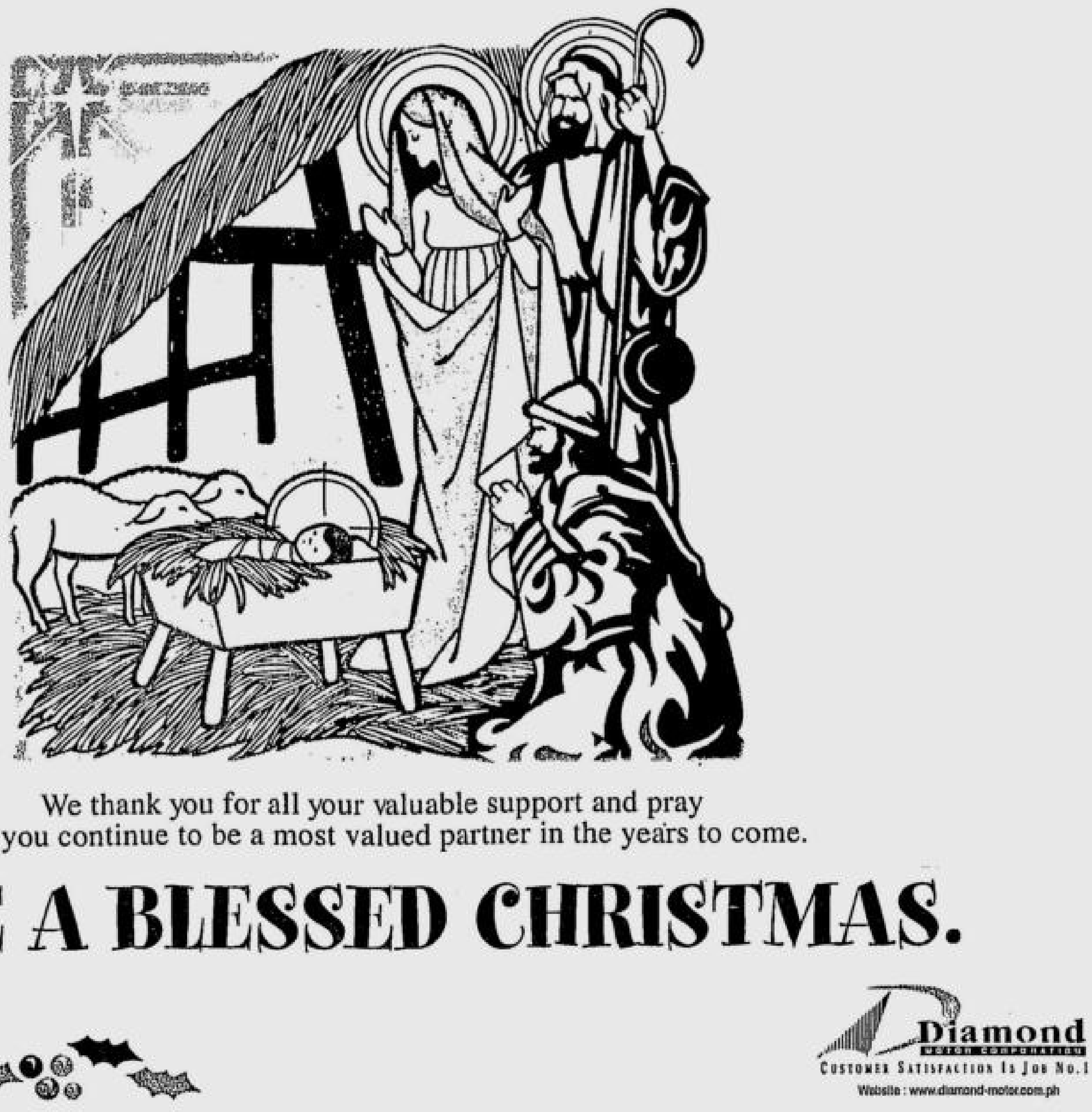

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2 kidnap gangs busted

(From page A1)

Ebdane estimated the group's total take from ransom payments at P56 million.

"With the arrest of this group, we have solved the major kidnapping incidents in Metro Manila. Follow-up operations are ongoing to round up other members of the gang," Ebdane said as he presented the victims to the President.

Ms Macapagal said the raids proved that the police were working round the clock to rid the capital of kidnap gangs, identified as a major concern by both local businessmen and foreigners doing business in the Philippines.

"I am here to dramatize that this is a major breakthrough in scrapping the kidnap-for-ransom syndicates," Ms Macapagal said. She warned kidnappers that "their days are numbered."

M-16 rifles, shotguns, grenades, tear gas canisters, two hand-held radios and ammunition, as well as police uniforms, were recovered from the suspects.

NAKTAF DETAINEE

INTERIOR Secretary Jose Lina and Justice Secretary Hernando Perez present to President Macapagal-Arroyo the kidnap suspects during a press conference on Monday at Camp Crame. JOAN BONDOC

Ebdane said one of the suspects, alleged gang leader Rolando Villaver, grabbed an assault rifle from a policeman during interrogation and opened fire, hitting one police officer in the arm.

Other policemen returned fire and wounded the 24-year-old suspect in the back.

The two others arrested in connection with the abduction of Castañeda were identified as Edgardo Decipolo, 33, and Eduardo Robledo, 24. With Villaver, they were arrested in Alaminos, Laguna.

Villaver was not among those presented to the media. He is currently in a hospital undergoing treatment for his wound.

The seven suspects behind Ang's abduction were identified as Ric Parcia, 21; Robert Ferrer, 22; Fernando Somido, 42; Rogelio Bibit, 50; Emma Bibit, 47; Raymund Fruto, 22; and Felicito Belonio Braga, 23.

They were also allegedly involved in the kidnapping of Mark John Giga in September, Ebdane said.

Intense intelligence

Crusader Teresita Ang-See of the Citizens Action Against Crime lauded the Naktaf operatives for their intense intelligence work that led to the suspects' arrest.

"The men really deserved congratulations and these things don't happen overnight. The intelligence gathering against these groups started way back . . . in October," she said during the press conference.

"This is a big Christmas and New Year's present to the Chinese community," she added, as she urged the suspects to help the police arrest the masterminds.

Also present during the conference were PNP Director General Leandro Mendoza, other police officials, Justice Secretary Hernando Perez and Interior Secretary Joey Lina.

The raids came a day after members of the same police crack team, backed by the military, rescued Canadian national Pierre Belanger from the Pentagon gang.

They stormed the hideout of the Pentagon gang in Buenavista, Davao del Norte early Sunday, killing two gang members.

The Pentagon gang still holds an Italian priest, Giuseppe Pierantoni, who was abducted on Oct. 17 shortly after celebrating Mass in the coastal town of Dimataling, Zamboanga del Sur.

The Abu Sayyaf group, which has been linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network, still holds American missionaries Martin and Gracia Burnham and Filipina nurse Deborah Yap on Basilan island.

Another foreigner, whose identity and nationality the police declined to disclose, was kidnapped last week. ***With reports from AFP, AP***

Heart baby doing well after surgery

(From page A1)

Filipino child sponsored by the US-based Gift of Life Foundation, which is devoted to saving children in need of delicate heart surgery.

Her story and how she was able to touch the lives of people in three countries—the United States, Sweden and the Philippines—has kindled hope for other ailing Filipino children.

Indeed, three more are scheduled for surgery through the Gift of Life program—Jerden Sampang on Jan. 8; Joshua Perez, Jan. 15; and John Morades, February.

About 12 more Filipino kids with congenital heart defects, whose parents were given hope by an earlier INQUIRER report on Dajed, are awaiting sponsorship so they can also be treated in the United States.

"It was from despair to hope indeed," said Jennifer, who recalled the events before, during and after Dajed's operation. "It was as if God was guiding us every step of the way."

Prayers

The operation, sponsored by the Gift of Life Rotary District 7490 in New Jersey, was made possible by the Manchester Regional High School Interact Club, whose president and founder, 17-year-old Erica Topp, had been moved by Jennifer's plea on the Internet last May 6.

Jennifer, then in search of a US sponsor for Dajed's surgery, posted her appeal in the Sweden-based BOES.org website that helps match children with sponsorship programs.

Erica is also the executive secretary of the Gift of Life Rotary District 7490, which her father Andrew "Andy" Topp chairs.

On Sept. 27 outside the Pediatric Critical Care Unit of the hospital, Jennifer was praying hard. With her in the waiting room were Erica and Andy.

The rest of the Topps—Erica's mother Karen and her siblings Joshua, Zachary and Linnea—were in their home in Haledon and praying just as hard for Dajed.

It was the Topps who hosted Dajed and Jennifer's stay in the United States since they arrived for the operation on Sept. 18 via Northwest Airlines.

In the operating room, Jennifer said, doctors led by Dajed's surgeon, Dr. Gregory Cooke, and even the nurses in the corridors, who had earlier met her and were touched by her vivacity, were hoping for the best.

A few miles from the hospital, prayers were pouring forth for Dajed from Erica's classmates, who had helped raise the needed $5,000 for the surgery through coin drives, flower sales, walkathons and corporate donations.

On the other side of the globe, Dajed's father, Marvin, was also praying hard, along with the Montojos' friends and relatives who had initially raised funds in Manila.

Even in Sweden, child rights advocate Bo Eric Sanderg, founder of BOES.org, the Internet lifeline that paved the way for this miracle, was thinking of Dajed and praying for her.

Was it any wonder that she got well so quickly?

Recovery

A few hours after the surgery, she was responding to Jennifer and Erica's voices.

The next day, Sept. 28, she was "extubated" and taken off the respirator. On that day, Jennifer recalled, she heard Dajed calling her in a "very soft voice" and even managing to smile. She was very thirsty and consumed two cups of ice chips.

On Sept. 29, the urine catheter and the tubes in Dajed's groin and foot were taken out.

On Oct. 1, Dajed was standing on her own. The two tubes were also taken out of her chest, and only one was left connected to her lungs.

But on Oct. 2, that tube was taken out, too, after four X-rays showed that she was healing fine.

"I could see Dajed smile right after (the chest tube) was taken out. She was relieved. She began walking in the corridors, entertained the nurses with dance, counted and recited the alphabet. She hugged everyone and they were saying that she's so cute and smart," Jennifer wrote in her diary.

Her account of the operation as well as the pictures she took of Dajed while in the United States were all posted on the BOES.org website.

Jennifer said the doctors and nurses suggested that she put Dajed in a "genius school." She recalled how Dajed would pose gamely for pictures just five days after the operation, play with the nurses, and do "silly" poses.

The child delighted the doctors—including Henry Issenberg, director of the hospital's pediatric heart station—the nurses, and even the other patients.

"They were very kind to us," Jennifer said, recalling that Doctors Issenberg and Cooke waived their fees for the operation.

Love, friendship

As soon as Dajed could speak after the operation, she told the Sandberg, a Swedish professor and child rights advocate, over the phone, "I love you, Bo."

On Oct. 3, six days after the operation, Dajed was declared fine and was discharged from the hospital.

"She is doing very well, and is anxious to return 'home' to play with the other children—my siblings," Erica Topp wrote on that day.

Already, there is talk that an international production outfit could be interested in filming the Montojos', particularly Dajed's, story as well as the friendship spanning three countries that it created.

"She was made for a special purpose," Jennifer told the INQUIRER of Dajed. "She has an international mission.

Jennifer is now thinking of writing to United Nations chair Kofi Annan about an action aid for Unicef. She said the whole experience opened her eyes and made her realize the possibilities for helping other people.

A former SM executive, she is now a volunteer for BOES.org, and advising other parents on how to get help for their ailing kids, providing a step-by-step guide for those whose children had accepted into the Gift of Life program.

DARELLE "Dajed" Montojo, 2: A miracle of survival after undergoing surgery to cure a rare heart ailment. JOAN BONDOC

Jennifer is also busy helping the parents of the Filipino kids who are scheduled for surgery next year.

Parents with children who have congenital heart ailments contact her constantly through her e-mail address jen.montojo@boes.org.

The Montojo family has developed a strong friendship with Sandberg, whose website is devoted to spreading awareness about children's rights across the world, and urging governments to follow through on their commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Sandberg has posted that declaration on his website in 16 languages.

According to Jennifer, there is a need for host families in Manila to provide shelter for ailing Filipino children and their companion—usually one of the parents—while they are preparing to fly to the United States for the surgery.

She aired a call for organizations or individuals to sponsor the airfare to and from the United States for needy children who had been accepted into the Gift of Life program.

She recalled that at the time she posted her plea at BOES.org on May 6, she was just about ready to give up on her search for heart foundations that could provide free surgery for Dajed.

The Sweden-based website was to be her last try.

"We prayed that this would be the last one. If they don't reply, we thought, we'll just proceed with Dajed's surgery here," Jennifer said.

But surgery here would have meant that Dajed would be fitted with an artificial valve that would only provide a temporary solution to her problem.

She would have had to undergo follow-up surgery, as her heart would eventually outgrow the valve.

On May 8, the Montojos talked to a visiting US surgeon at the Philippine Heart Center who told them that he could perform the surgery the following week.

But when he found that Dajed had a cold, he postponed the surgery until his next visit in December.

"The Lord allowed her to have a cold because He would surprise us with a wonderful blessing," Jennifer said.

When she got home and checked her e-mail, she found the reply of Sandberg, telling her that Dajed's medical files and pictures had been uploaded to his website.

Unknown to the Montojos, Sandberg was also about ready to give up that day because of lack of funds to maintain the site devoted to children's rights.

But the immediate response generated by Jennifer's plea posted on his site gave him hope to keep on. Two days later, on May 8, Erica Topp in the United States responded to Jennifer's e-mail, telling her that Dajed was in "good hands now."

Erica has been involved in the Gift of Life program since she was 2 years old. Her family hosted eight other children before Dajed.

As for Sandberg, up to now the Montojos do not know how he looks. Dajed knows only his voice, and is familiar with his website where her miracle story was posted.

When asked for something to remember him by, Sandberg sent the Montojos a picture of him when he was 2 years old, the same age as Dajed.

Mawanay won't leave safe house

(From page A1)

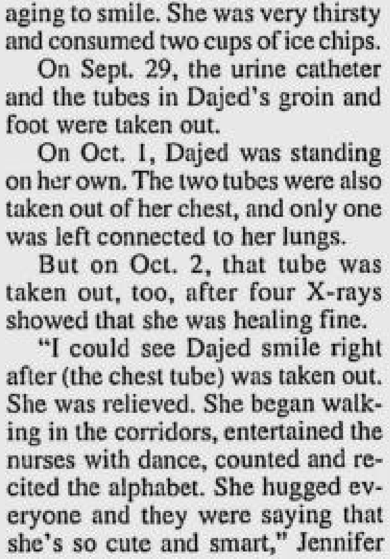
but that his security escorts stopped him.

"My escorts told me they had not received orders to allow me to leave," he said. "A few minutes later, I got a call from a Malacañang official asking me to stay put until these problems are sorted out. So I have no choice but to stay."

He identified the Malacañang official, but told the INQUIRER that the official had requested not to be publicly named.

Mawanay, a supposed civilian agent of the then Lacson-led Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force, has testified on the senator's alleged dollar accounts in banks overseas, which Isafp chief Col. Victor Corpus earlier disclosed.

The Isafp has accused Mawanay of swindling people of P2 million from the buying and selling of smuggled cellular phones supposedly conducted while under its protective custody.



FILE PHOTO/JOAN BONDOC

MAWANAY: Dropped from the Department of Justice's Witness Protection Program?

But Mawanay said yesterday: "If indeed I have committed a crime, where are the cases filed against me? There is none yet. So, I demanded that I be given due process. They have to hear whatever I have to say. They haven't even tried to get my side."

'Bahala na siya'

The DOJ yesterday confirmed that Mawanay had been dropped as a witness because of the alleged swindling.

"His WPP coverage was terminated last week before the holidays because of the cell phone scam," Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño said.

Zuño also said the Isafp was even planning to file charges against Mawanay. "But we're still giving him time to find another place . . . which can give him protective coverage. *Bahala na siya* (He has to fend for himself)," Zuño added.

Mawanay's lawyer Argee Guevarra is clueless that he is staying put.

Guevarra said the DOJ decision to drop him was "a very painful Christmas gift for Ador."

Asked about his client's whereabouts, Guevarra said he did not know Mawanay's "exact location."

"But he is in the province," the lawyer said.

Early this month, Mawanay claimed that he hacked into bank files using a computer supposedly provided by the Isafp. He said he did this on Nov. 12-15 with Corpus' permission.

But Corpus denied this, saying Mawanay had gained the information on Lacson's supposed bank deposits "on his own free will."

WPP Director Leo Dacera has threatened to strip Mawanay of his privileges as a state witness if it could be proven that he hacked into computer files to get Lacson's supposed bank records.

"That may be a ground for termination," said Dacera, who pointed out that hacking is a crime under the country's e-commerce law.

'Where will he go?'

Last Thursday, Dante Jimenez, chair of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC), took up the cudgels for Mawanay and filed a motion for reconsideration with the DOJ.

"We worry about the safety and security of Ador and his family," Jimenez said. "After testifying against Senator Lacson, where will he go? He cannot just go back to his parents or his wife's parents and risk their exposure to the same threat that he and his family are facing now."

Jimenez expressed the belief that the DOJ was sending a "wrong signal" to potential witnesses with its plan to dump "a credible witness just like that, putting his and his family's lives at stake."

He said it was difficult for the VACC to find witnesses against corruption and heinous crimes, and that it took "courage and sacrifice" to come out and testify, especially if the one accused was a senator like Lacson.

"While we do not condone the alleged sins committed by Ador, we cannot also allow this government to abandon the case against Lacson by dumping an important witness," Jimenez said. "The DOJ can well conduct its own investigation against Ador, and file a case against him if warranted."

Told that Mawanay's credibility was now being questioned because of his alleged crime, Jimenez said Mawanay "was and remains credible."

"That's why he was admitted to the Witness Protection Program," Jimenez added. "Ador should be given due process in the same way that the government is according Lacson due process. Fair is fair."

Mawanay was accepted in the WPP last October upon Corpus' recommendation.

Christmas

Mawanay said he and his family would prepare a Christmas Eve "*noche buena*" of spaghetti for the three other witnesses and their respective families who are sharing the safe house.

He said each witness was being provided a monthly allowance of P6,000, but that only he did not receive the P3,000 bonus supposedly given by Justice Secretary Hernando Perez.

He said all he got from Perez was a basket that contained a kilo of rice, a kilo of sugar, coffee, powdered milk, a chocolate drink, a can of luncheon meat, six cans of sardines, soap, toothpaste and assorted candies.

"We will celebrate Christmas any way we can," Mawanay said.

"Merry Christmas to all, and may justice and peace reign in this country."

He also insisted that he owed "some people" only about P720,000, and not P2 million.

"The DOJ knows that I admitted owing some people money, but I also promised to settle the problem as soon as I can," he said. "I am not running away from my responsibilities. They just have to give me a chance to explain, and they will understand the reason for the delay of deliveries and payments."

Christmas sad, grim in Jesus' birthplace

(From page A1)

ditional site of Jesus' birth—keeps herself busy arranging postcards, but at 11 a.m. she pulls down the steel shutters.

No tourists and no pilgrims equal no customers for most merchants here.

"Before, I was open 24 hours a day, but now there's no point," she moaned.

Things did not look so bleak just two years ago, when Pope John Paul II visited for the 2000th jubilee of Jesus' birth. Bethlehem got a full facelift and settled down to wait for the tourist gravy train to pull into town.

Instead it had to face up to the intifada, which started as widespread street protests against Israel in September 2000 and quickly degenerated into armed clashes, with Palestinian gunman facing off Israeli tanks in the streets and bullets pock-marking the Church of the Nativity.

There are still signs of the promise once held out to the town. An impressive clock donated by the mayor of Athens for the jubilee, and the Peace Center, a brand new building on Manger Square that has survived physically unscathed, but welcomed a paltry nine visitors on Sunday.

A PALESTINIAN woman and her child light candles inside the Church of the Nativity, believed to be the birthplace of Jesus Christ, in the West Bank town of Bethlehem on Sunday. REUTERS

Arafat

And here and there are the neon stars and the sign on one building proclaiming, "Welcome to His Excellency, President Yasser Arafat."

Even that tradition is in doubt this year after Israel banned Arafat from making his habitual visit to midnight Mass in the town, which he has not missed since his Palestinian Authority took control of the town in 1995.

Israel said he would not be allowed to leave the West Bank town of Ramallah, where he has been marooned since Israel destroyed his helicopters, until he has done more to arrest extremists who assassinated an Israeli Cabinet minister in October.

A defiant Arafat said he would make the Mass even if he had to walk, but just how he would circumvent a clutch of Israeli checkpoints was unclear in his never-say-die speech.

"This decision is stupid," said the mayor. "They tried to humiliate the Palestinian Authority."

He said Arafat's presence was important because for Bethlehem's sizeable Christian population "Christmas does not just have a religious significance, it's also a national day."

Despite being a Muslim, Arafat sits year after year in the front row of Saint Catherine's Church, which leads into the Church of the Nativity, to attend a service with Christian Palestinians. Last year, his entrance was applauded by the faithful.

Most agree on the importance of his presence, but it is only with the prospect of his absence in sight that the issue has taken on a greater significance.

"It's a matter of principle. The Israelis don't have the right to stop him from coming," said Tatyana Abu Dayed, 21, a student in Bethlehem.

"Every year he's there, in the first row. If this year he didn't come, there would be something missing," she said.

Sitting in front of the mayor, one of the city employees said: "I don't think he's going to come. He shouldn't play the Israelis' games."

Behind him, large portraits of Arafat look out over Manger Square. Palestinian police have just finished decorating the square with two giant posters of their leader, including one on the roof of the Peace Center.

Nazareth

On a hillside above the traffic and lights of modern Nazareth, visitors to the reenactment of the 2,000-year-old Christmas story sought a rare glimpse of hope in a tumultuous Middle East.

Down below in the town where Jesus grew up, Arab Christians and Muslims have grown more distrustful of one another. They are divided over the construction of a mosque beside an old church that sits above the grotto where Christians believe an angel foretold the birth of Jesus.

"Even in dangerous places God protects us," said Ghassan Ghraueb, an Arab Christian from Nazareth who stood by the manger, holding his year-old daughter Nur, whose name means "light" in Arabic.

The few dozen mostly Arab visitors to the Nativity had just begun to sing "Joy to the World" in Arabic and then English, barely noticing the Muslim call to prayer echoing from mosque minarets through the city below.

The overlap of the city's two faiths has in recent years begun to divide the Arab town of 70,000 people, one-third of them Christians, the rest Muslims.

In the days before Christmas, bulldozers continued to rumble through a deep pit being readied for construction of a mosque beside the Basilica of the Annunciation, where tradition says the Angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary she would give birth to Jesus.

Hanging above the construction site on a green banner, a Koranic verse reads: "God is the one and only. He wasn't begotten and he does not beget, and he never had anyone related to him."

For Danny Kopp, 24, a Christian from Jerusalem, the banner and the building of the mosque so close to the Basilica are a provocation.

He is part of the International Coalition for Nazareth, which groups a number of Christian denominations. The group believes the Israeli government approved construction of the mosque to win Arab votes.

Kopp worries the dispute might again lead to clashes as it has in past violence that included a city council fistfight, Easter Sunday riots two years ago and the smashing of windows of Christian-run shops.

"Giving them the green light to build a mosque here is giving them the green light to continue to suppress Christians," he said.

Kopp and seven others from the group snapped photos of the digging Saturday until an angry crowd asked them to leave.

A short, stocky man shouted at them, "Welcome to the Islamic Holy Land." Another man warned, "Go now for your own safety." And an elderly Muslim in a red headscarf wagged a finger.

The dispute arose when the city of Nazareth approved a plan for a public plaza in front of the church for the thousands of Christian pilgrims who were expected to visit for millennium celebrations.

But the Israeli government says about a third of the square belongs to the Wakf—the Muslim religious trust—and also approved a Muslim request to build a mosque there.

The site had in the past been used as a place for Muslim prayers, a Muslim school and Muslim-owned shops. Muslims say beneath the lot is the grave of Shahib al-Din, a nephew of Saladin, the Muslim commander who led an army in defeating the Crusaders in 1187.

Salam Abu Ahmed, head of the Islamic Movement in Nazareth, said the building of the mosque next to the church could be a symbol of brotherhood.

"I am very surprised by what is happening here because we are going to build a mosque to pray for God; the church in Nazareth is to pray also for the same God," he said, raising his voice to be heard over the rattle of the bulldozers. *Reports from AP and AFP*

Pope asks bandits in RP: Free captives

(From page A1)

the kidnappers' hearts to pity and lead them to release these persons," the Pope said. "For them and for their families, I assure them that I keep them in my prayer."

The Pope made the appeal at the end of the Angelus, the prayer on the mystery of the Incarnation, which he traditionally recites every Sunday noon from his Apostolic Residence.

Earlier on Sunday, police in the Philippines rescued a Canadian man held hostage for nearly two months by a notorious gang that has been blamed for seizing several foreigners in the southern Philippines.

The same gang, known as the Pentagon Group, is holding Pierantoni.

No early release

On Monday, the Philippine government said its armed forces were doing their best to free the Burnhams and a Filipina nurse, Deborah Yap, held by the Abu Sayyaf but played down expectations of any release for Christmas or the New Year.

National Security Adviser Roilo Golez told local television channel ANC in Manila that conditions were extremely hostile and described earlier projected release dates as targets and not deadlines.

Golez also ruled out the possibility of US Special Forces helping free the hostages, who have been held for months by Abu Sayyaf gunmen linked in the past by Washington to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network.

"We would like to assure everyone that the military is trying to do their best to meet their own self-imposed deadlines, it's just that the situation there is so difficult," he said.

"It's very tough guerrilla warfare being conducted by both sides under very hostile conditions."

The Armed Forces of the Philippines earlier vowed to free the hostages by Dec. 16. Having missed that date, the Army said it was confident the hostages could be freed before the end of year.

"It's not a deadline, it's more of an objective," Golez said.

No US troops

"If someone posts a deadline it's a way of self-motivation."

Golez ruled out the use of US ground troops in the hunt for the hostages. "That kind of assistance is not going to be possible . . . the presence of (United States) ground troops would not jive with the provisions of our Constitution," he said.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

The Philippine Constitution forbids foreign troops from being used in active military engagement.

The Abu Sayyaf freed some hostages in exchange for ransom but beheaded others, including American Guillermo Sobero. The group says it is fighting for a southern Islamic homeland. Its main activity appears to be kidnapping.

US military helicopters are to arrive in the Philippines next month for use against the Abu Sayyaf, according to Lt. Gen. Benjamin Defensor, chief of the Philippine Air Force.

Defensor is in the military's Southern Command in Zamboanga City to oversee operations against the bandits.

The UH-1H helicopters would be used to transport troops to the islands of Jolo and Basilan.

"We need these kinds of choppers so we can transport troops even at night and this would boost our fighting capability, especially (against) the Abu Sayyaf in the jungle," Defensor said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is a staunch supporter of the US-led war on terrorism, and Washington has pledged millions of dollars worth of military aid to help the Philippines crush the insurgency.

Last week, the US government delivered a cache of automatic rifles. *Inquirer wires*

Bro. Mike as Virgin Mary? Gloria chided

(From page A1)

(Macapagal) get her idea that Brother Mike's fate is the same (as) that of the Blessed Virgin Mary? Her statement if not insulting is highly revolting to millions of thinking and decent people of this country," said Gerry Albert-Corpuz of the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya).

He assailed the President for hailing the dropping of plunder charges against Velarde. Corpuz said the charges were dropped not because of "heavenly intervention" but because of "political accommodation."

"The Macapagal administration is courting the support of allies and supporters of deposed President Joseph Estrada and rally them behind her equally corrupt and anti-people administration," Corpuz said.

At a pre-dawn family reunion of El Shaddai followers at the Quirino Grandstand on Sunday, the President recalled the Virgin Mary's difficulties after St. Joseph learned about her pregnancy during their engagement and considered separating from her until an angel appeared to him and explained that Mary was in fact bearing the Son of God.

Ms Macapagal said that if the Mother of God herself had experienced condemnation, what more a "servant leader" (referring to Velarde), who was only acting upon and following the example of Jesus Christ.

But Pamalakaya lambasted the President.

"How the President will reconcile Brother Mike's big profit from the sale of overpriced land to the government and his connection with the Virgin Mary is her problem," Corpuz said in a statement.

"As far as we are concerned, the Virgin Mary was not and was never into syndicated deals like this. Brother Mike is a false prophet clad in a religious wardrobe and comparing him to Virgin Mary would gravely insult millions of decent Christians in the country," the statement read.

The statement did not indicate, however, whether the members of the militant fishers' group themselves subscribed to the belief that the Blessed Virgin was indeed the Mother of God.

The Office of the Ombudsman dismissed for lack of evidence the plunder and graft charges filed against Estrada, Velarde and 17 other respondents in connection with the sale of nine pieces of land worth P1.22 billion in 1999. The government bought the land from Velarde for the right of way needed by the C-5 Road link of the Manila-Cavite Toll Expressway.

The land, which has a total area of 79,355 square meters, was sold at P15,355 per, far above its market value of P4,950 per square meter. The government lost P828 million from the purchase.

Corpuz said Macapagal and Velarde were both "false icons, fake redeemers and bogus messiahs . . . who would use religion as tool for effective deception of people."

NY mayor Time's Person of the Year

(From page A1)

serves to stride the world stage like a Stalin and a Hitler, or even a Khomeini," Kelly said.

Soviet leader Josef Stalin was Time's Person of the Year in 1939 and 1942, German dictator Adolph Hitler in 1938, and Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979.

Giuliani agreed with Time's judgment of Bin Laden.

"I think it's much better that I was selected as a representative of the people of New York City rather than him," the mayor said at his news conference.

"His ultimate objective was obviously not just to kill people, his objective was to destroy the spirit of America. The spirit of America is now stronger than it has ever been before."

'Superhuman'

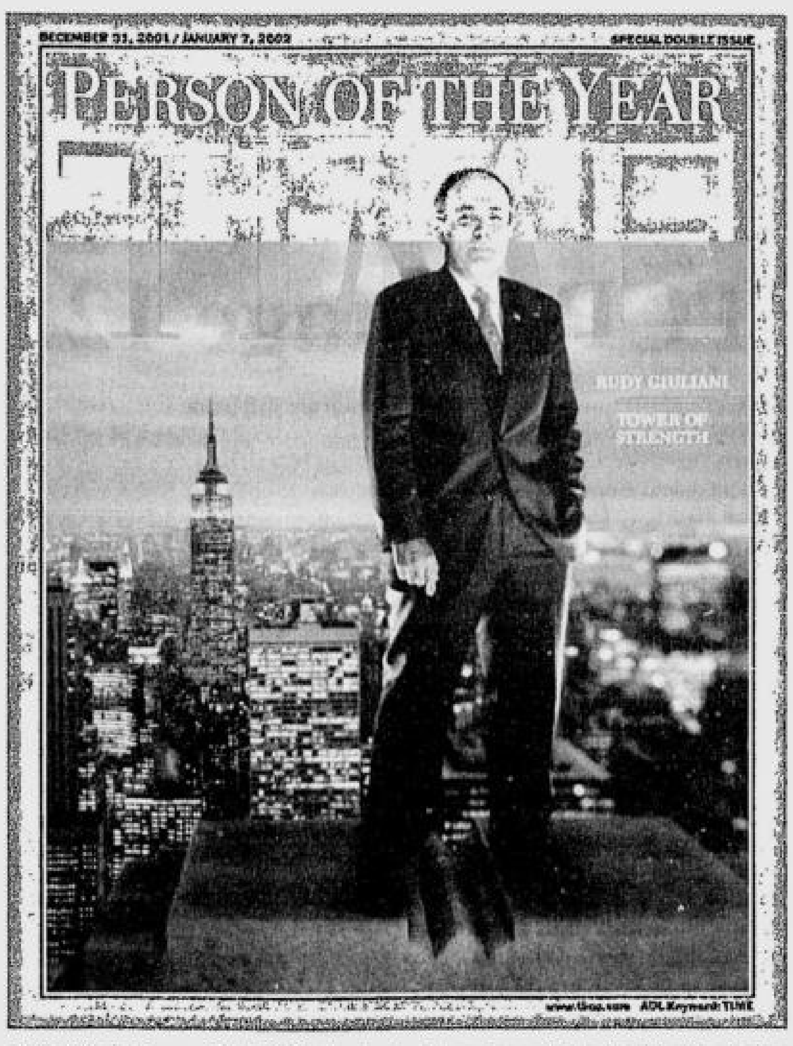
The award's criterion was set in 1925 by Time founder Henry Luce: "The person or persons who most affected the news of our lives, for good or ill, this year."

President George W. Bush, Time's 75th Person of the Year, made it to the short list along with Bin Laden.

Kelly said Giuliani "managed to touch us emotionally in a way that nobody else did, including the president."

He said Time chose Giuliani "because of his courage on Sept. 11 and afterward, because a very human man showed superhuman strengths at a time when the entire country was being tested."

From the first moments after two hijacked planes slammed into the World Trade Center's twin towers, Giuliani has been ubiquitous: racing to the scene of the destruction and nearly getting buried when the towers collapsed, calmly giving news conferences, leading a succession of world leaders to "ground zero" to help solidify the international coalition against Bin Laden and his al-Qaida organization, and attending more than 200 funerals and wakes of those who died in the attacks.



NEW York Mayor Rudolf Giuliani stands on top of the world after being chosen Time's Person of the Year. REUTERS

"For being brave when required and rude when appropriate and tender without being trite, for not sleeping and not quitting and not shrinking from the pain all around him, Rudy Giuliani, Mayor of the World, is Time's Person of the Year," wrote Time reporter Nancy Gibbs in the issue that hit newsstands yesterday.

Civic saint

Giuliani, who pulled out of the Senate race last year to battle prostate cancer, finishes his second four-year term as mayor on Dec. 31. He leaves office amid an outpouring of praise that contrasts with the period prior to Sept. 11, when newspapers were full of tidbits about his divorce and accounts of his angry public outbursts.

Giuliani had his share of difficulties—from a series of fatal police shootings of unarmed black men in which he reflexively defended the officers, to a losing battle with the Brooklyn Museum of Art over what he labeled "indecent" art.

But in a span of a few days, Giuliani's unusually gentle handling of a city in despair after the attack vaulted him from being regarded as a prickly lame duck politician who had run out of ideas to a civic saint mentioned for the Nobel Prize.

Giuliani had acknowledged recently that there were some things he could have done better.

"I have the feeling that you have when you've done everything you could. Where you feel, 'Well, I haven't held back any effort'," Giuliani said.

"There are things I probably would do differently in terms of judgments . . . if I could make them again, but I've given every effort that I'm capable of and I tried to do as good a job as mayor as I possibly could. So I feel happy about that at least."

Giuliani said he planned to open a private consulting firm.

Many New Yorkers have said they were uncertain how New York, its economy wounded by the Sept. 11 attacks, would fare without Giuliani at the helm. *Reuters, AP*

Skate sharpener dies at 95

ST. PAUL, Minnesota —Arthur Peterson, who invented the E-Z Sharp skate sharpening machine used by pro and college hockey teams, municipal arenas and sporting goods stores, died. He was 95. He died Friday after a yearlong battle with prostate cancer. Peterson began making the sharpeners in his basement to sharpen skates for his children, his son Richard recalled. The business grew as others began asking him to make sharpeners.

SPORTS

AL S. MENDOZA, Editor EDWIN M. VILLANUEVA, Assistant Editor

BLAST FROM THE PAST

TODAY in 1990, Bernardo Llentada clocked 1 hour, 28 minutes and 50.25 seconds to rule the eliminations of the Professional Cyclists Association of the Philippines in Sta. Rosa, Laguna. Also today in 1992, NM Mirabeau Maga scored seven wins and 2 draws to bag the Fabcon Masters League Open at the Metropolitan Chess Club in Manila.

MARCH 7-10

W'Wack to host RP Open

Asia's oldest tourney is back to APGA-Davidoff Tour fold

CANTADA

GOLF will make a monumental stride next year.

The Philippine Open, Asia's oldest national tournament, will be held again at the fabled East Course of Wack Wack Golf and Country in Mandaluyong City on March 7-10.

But the bigger catch is this: The coming Open will be the sixth leg of the 2002 Asian PGA-run Davidoff Tour.

The RP Open's return to Asia's mainstream golf will push the country to international sporting heights again as the region's top parbusters will trade shots with the budding stars of Europe, Australia and the United States.

Total pot will not be less than $175,000 in the fabled Open, won the last time by Cassius Casas over a sprinkling of Asian hotshots, notably those from Australia.

Cantada a revelation

Gerard Cantada was a revelation in the last Open, finishing among the Top 5 in his professional debut. But his auspicious start was overshadowed by his gesture of donating half of his prize money to the victims of the Mt. Mayon Volcano eruption in Bicol.

Among the past Open winners were Filipino hotshot Frankie Miñoza, Carlos Franco of Paraguay, Australian Peter Thomson, Taiwan's Lu Liang-huan and other legendary Filipino golfers like Celestino Tugot, Luis "Golem" Silverio and Ben Arda.

FELICIANO

ABALOS

"We welcome the return of the APGA to the Philippine Open," said Rod Feliciano, president of the organizing National Golf Association of the Philippines (NGAP). "This should bode well for us as I am sure we can expect another great tournament in 2002. The NGAP will always be ready for the challenge."

Miñoza, who won in 1998, is expected to compete along with many of the top players on the Davidoff Tour.

"It is an honor for Wack Wack to host the RP Open once again and we look forward to welcoming so many great players back to our famous club," said Benjamin S. Abalos Sr., president of Wack Wack Golf and Country Club.

'Great start'

The Philippine Open will be played a week after another of Asia's great national opens, the Carlsberg Malaysian Open.

"The Philippine Open will help provide the Davidoff Tour with a great start to the year. The RP Open is rich in history and is a popular even among all our members," said Ramlan Harun, Asian PGA's executive director.

The Philippine Open has helped next year's Davidoff Tour reach a record amount of prize money for the first half of the season.

For the opening stretch of 2002, nearly $5 million will be up for grabs in 10 events. The increase, helped by the Carlsberg Malaysian Open's record $1 million purse, is over a million dollars more than the first half of this year.

The 2002 Davidoff Tour will kick off at the $1.3 million Johnnie Walker Classic at Lake Karrinyup Golf in Perth, Australia, on Jan. 24-27.

The event will be tri-sanctioned by the Asian PGA, European and Australian Tours for the third year in a row. It will feature top stars including South African Ernie Els, Spain's Sergio Garcia and Colin Montgomerie of Scotland.

On charity

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

SOMEONE said the best form of charity is extravagance. The prodigality of the rich is providence of the poor.

I agree.

I know some rich fellas who tend to under spend amid a time of over spending. They "hold their punches" when there is need to spend. Like when they are dining in a restaurant. They love to restrain themselves from ordering some more when it is wise to order more than less. Many are the hungry who would always feast on leftovers. Street children. Guards on duty. Maids waiting in the dead of night. The homeless litter the city.

I have a friend whose motto is worth copying: "I splurge on food because I work my butt out. That is how I reward myself."

Nobody wants to be called a spendthrift. But society teems with Silas Marners.

There is now an abundance of food on the table. Christmas also spells excess. The trick is to handle it well. Distribute the bounty. Share it not with the poor alone but also with the wealthy. Christmas is giving more than receiving, to use a cliché. You don't say "Merry Christmas" to the poor alone. You say it to everybody.

There's the neighbor to greet. If you haven't done any greeting during the year for one reason or another, do it now. If you remain not in the mood to do it, act out your greeting: Send a gift. An apple. A banana. A suman. Any gift will do.

Money also flows this time of year. The rich, the not-so-very-rich, will surely give. Some of the very rich will give only a little. Fine with me. Not to others, I'm sure.

But not to pontificate, fellas, money is like a basketball: It keeps coming back. Like the basketball, you dribble your money, you pass it to someone and, before you know it, it has bounced back to you.

In the end, it's the purity of your action, the genuineness of your heart, that will make your life meaningful all year round.

Merry Christmas!

■

The remains of Fidel J. Tabliago, father of Fil-Estate's Dante, will be buried tomorrow at the Mangatarem Catholic Cemetery (Pangasinan). I was in the elementary grades when Tio Fidel inspired me to the world of "lettering." Because I loved to draw and was quite art-inclined early in life, I did the covers of my schoolmates' albums when it was project time. Tio Fidel was my mentor. Bye Tio Fidel. You will be missed.

CASAS: Big winner at Wack Wack. FILE PHOTO

Federation senior golfers hold 'big bang' Dec. 28

MALBAROSA

THE FEDERATION of Philippine Senior Golfers, Inc. will stage its year-ending "big bang" golf tournament on Dec. 28 at Wack Wack Golf and Country Club East Course in the City of Mandaluyong.

FPSGI president S.P. Malbarosa said yesterday that the tournament will adopt the shotgun start.

Some 150 players are expected to participate.

"But everybody needs to pre-register," said Malbarosa.

There will be team competitions in the 6-to-play, 4-to-count format. Age brackets will be determined by groupings.

Attractive prizes will be given to the team champion, low gross scorer, low net maker and the three best net finishers per age bracket.

Tee-off time will be at 10 a.m. in the tournament that will stake a golf cart as a hole-in-one prize.

Among the early donors are Fortune Tobacco, Kart Plaza, Rep. Bibit Duavit, MMDA Chair Ben Abalos, Lucio Yan, Esting Teopaco, Rudy Samson and Frisco San Juan.

Joe Cantada Memorial tilt to involve pa-son tandem

THIS year's Milo Joe Cantada Memorial Parent and Child Junior golf tournament will be played Thursday, Dec. 27, at the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club's East Course in the City of Mandaluyong.

Tee-off time is 9 a.m.

The Philippine Junior Golf Federation launched this tournament in 1992 to perpetuate the memory of the noted sportscaster Joe Cantada, who died of cancer that year.

"All ID-bearing PJGF members are eligible to play with their biological/adoptive parents," said Federation president Edgardo "Boy" Cantada, Joe's younger brother.

The awarding ceremonies and the Federation's Christmas party will follow immediately after the tournament at the newly inaugurated Cantada Sports Center in Taguig, Metro manila.

"I would like to thank Metro Manila Development Authority chair and Wack Wack president Ben Abalos and sports and games committee chair Tonichi Tuason for their continued support."

Aside from Milo, Wack Wack and Pacsports are supporting the 18-hole, one-ball two-some tournament.

As in all Federation events, there will be no entry fees nor green fees.

Ateneo's Canlas tops Manzano Cup

ATENEO'S Christian Canlas beat Martin Ramos, 6-1, 6-1, recently to pocket the boys' 12 under title in the 4th Armando Manzano Memorial Cup Tennis Championships at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

Using crisp groundstrokes, Canlas did not give Ramos breathing space in the one-sided match. The Ateneo bet ousted top seed Julian Felipe Mayor, 6-1, 6-4, in the semifinals.

Top seed De Guzman ruled the boys' 18-under crown by outlasting Yannick Guba of Bacolod, 6-3, 3-6, 6-3. Second seed Arithmetico Lim whipped Hussein Macapendag, 6-2, 6-2, to pocket the boys' under title.

Favorites Jessica Agra and Gerard Michael Ngo also ruled their respective divisions in this tournament held in honor of the late International Tennis Federation white badge referee Armando Manzano and supported by PSC, Viva Mineral Water and Dunlop, official ball.

SPORTS ON TV

COMPILED BY LORENZO MANGUIAT

GOLF: PGA National Car Rental Classic, Second Round at 2 p.m. (r) on Star Sports

PGA Bay Hill Invitational, Final Round at 11 p.m. on Star Sports

TENNIS: The Best of Wimbledon 2001 at 9 p.m. on Star Sports

ICE SKATING: Sparkassen Cup on Ice 2001, Highlights #2 at 9 a.m. (r) on Star Sports

BOWLING: CGU Asian Bowling Tour 2001 at 8:30 p.m. (r) on ESPN

SOCCER: English Premier Football League at noon on Star Sports and midnight on ESPN

EPL Highlights at 6 p.m. on Star Sports

Spanish Football League at 7 p.m. on Star Sports

MOTOR SPORTS: International Motorsport News 2001 at 8 a.m. (r – 4 p.m.) on Star Sports

2001 Asian Formula 2000, Round Fifteen & Round Sixteen at 11 a.m. (r) on Star Sports

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

MPTCP to stage 12 netfests in 2002

THE MEN'S Professional Tennis Council of the Philippines will hold a 12-leg Circuit around key cities in the country next year.

MPTCP president Adelo Abadia said the kick-off leg of the Circuit billed as "Tennis Tour 2002" will be held in April at the Centercourt Tennis Club in Bacolod City.

After Bacolod, the Circuit will go to Iloilo, Cebu and Ormoc. Venues of the Mindanao and Luzon swing are still being finalized.

The top eight seeds will get free airfares while the top 16 will be given free board and lodging by the host clubs.

Seedings for the first two legs will be based on the Philta national rankings while the remaining 10 legs, including the P300,000 Master's Extravaganza will follow the GAB-MPTCP circuit point system.

Each leg has a total cash prize of P100,000. The singles champion will get P20,000 and the runner-up P10,000.

The top 16 finishers after 11 legs will qualify in the Master's Extravaganza which will award P60,000 to the singles champion and P40,000 to the doubles winners.

Entry fee is P300 per event while MPTCP members will pay only P200.

Holyfield attends boxing's new centers

PINEVILLE, Louisiana —Evander Holyfield thinks this is just the thing - a place for boxers to train in the South.

When the four-time heavyweight champion was on the Olympic team in 1984 and the national team in 1983, he had to go to Colorado Springs, Colorado, to train.

"The majority of good fighters are from the South," said Holyfield, who is from Atlanta. "Now, this facility here will give people in the Southeastern part of the country the perfect place where they can come and train and not have distractions."

The USA Boxing center is expected to be ready by September. It is to be built on a 12.4-hectare (31-acre) site donated by Calvin Malone, co-owner of a fishing lures company and brother-in-law of Holyfield's trainer, Kenny Weldon. *AP*

ACTIVE CHESS

C.M. Iligan Realty All Lady-Master Team which participated in the recently concluded 2001 National Open Active Chess Team Tournament led by Cesar M. Iligan (Center) as team manager is shown with GM Eugene Torre and Joey Antonio, IA Gene Poliarco and coordinator Aya Orense. Shown seated (from left) are Joann Toledo, Christine Castellano, Tara Jade Aurelio and Leah Bernardo. C.M. Iligan Realty Dev't Corp. (422-0277) is the Developer of Pinewood Village, a 110-housing unit project in Imus, Cavite.

Manila prepares for Batang Pinoy

BY ARSENIC LACSON
Contributor

AFTER its resounding success in the 3rd Philippine National Youth Games-Batang Pinoy, the City of Manila is set to embark on a comprehensive grassroots sports development program for the city's in and out of school youth.

Manila Sports Council (Masco) chief Ali Atienza, son of Mayor Lito, has set his eyes on the staging of the 1st Manila Youth Games for children 12 years old and under.

"Manila is definitely focused on promoting the development of grassroots sports and we are resolved in re-establishing the city's culture of sports excellence," the young Atienza said.

The country's premiere city snatched this year's Philippine National Youth Games-Batang Pinoy overall team championship in Bacolod City, garnering 22 gold medals with only 46 children-athletes in the delegation.

"As an incentive, the City of Manila will grant scholarships and shall continue to support the training of the city's outstanding performers in the Batang Pinoy," Atienza said.

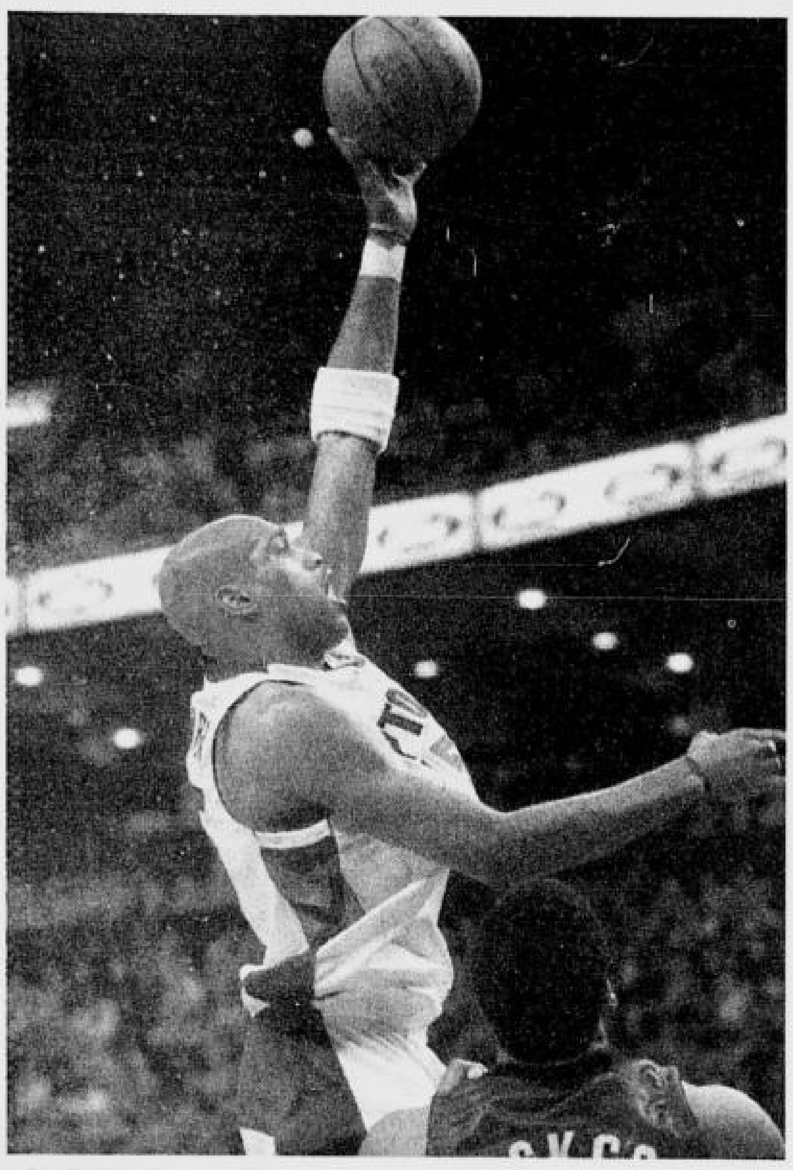
He added that behind the city's success in the Batang Pinoy is the Manila Kasali Ka sports program, which was started this year involving public schools and sports clubs in Manila in preparation for said event.

"The Kasali Ka will play a vital role in the preparation and staging of the 1st Manila Youth Games," said Atienza, the 1994 Asian Taekwondo Championships gold medalist.

He also said that through the program, Manila would be ready to defend its overall team title in the 4th edition of the Batang Pinoy Championships next year.

Sports on tap in The Kasali Ka program are swimming, taekwondo, boxing, basketball, and chess, but the Masco is expected to formally launch the program on a larger scale this coming year by adding athletics, dance sports, gymnastics, softball, and volleyball among others.

Bucks stop Spurs; Raptors clip Heat



TORONTO Raptors forward Vince Carter (left) drives past Miami Heat's guard Jim Jackson during second-half NBA action. The Raptors won, 83-76. AFP

SAN ANTONIO—Sam Cassell scored 33 points, and Glenn Robinson added 30 to lead the Milwaukee Bucks to a 101-91 victory over San Antonio on Sunday night, snapping the Spurs' 10-game winning streak.

The Bucks trailed 73-70 after three quarters, but used an 8-0 run to start the fourth to take a lead they would never relinquish. The loss was just the second at home for the Spurs (20-5).

Tim Duncan scored 22 points and had 18 rebounds, David Robinson added 21 and Steve Smith 20 for the Spurs, who are still off to the best start in franchise history.

Raptors 83, Heat 76

In Toronto, Vince Carter had 27 points and 10 rebounds to lead Toronto to its third straight victory.

Jim Jackson had a team-high 12 points for Miami, which has lost 18 of their last 21. The Heat, who shot 39 percent, entered averaging a league-low 82.7 points.

Antonio Davis added 12 points and 10 rebounds for the Raptors, who have not lost since calling a players-only meeting following a four-game losing streak.

Toronto played about a half-hour after assistant coach Stan Albeck was hospitalized after a stroke.

Celtics 85, Grizzlies 80

In Boston, Antoine Walker had 24 points and 11 rebounds, and Paul Pierce added 20 points to lead Boston over Memphis.

The Celtics used an 8-0 run in the final 1:30 to win their sixth straight home game.

Shane Battier scored 22 points, and Tony Massenberg 18 for the Grizzlies.

Kings 133, Suns 101

In Sacramento, California, Peja Stojakovic scored 26 of Sacramento's season-high points total as the Kings snapped a two-game losing slide.

The Kings improved to 14-1 at home and 20-9 overall, even though forward Chris Webber missed his third straight game with tendinitis in his left ankle.

Sacramento's Hedo Turkoglu had 21 points and 10 rebounds, despite leaving the game briefly in the third quarter after his eye was hurt on a flagrant foul by Alton Ford.

Vlade Divac, Mike Bibby, Doug Christie and Mateen Cleaves all scored 12 points for the Kings, who went 12-for-26 on 3-pointers. Divac added eight rebounds and seven assists.

Tony Delk led the Suns with 24 points, while Shawn Marion scored 18 of his 20 points in the second half. *AP*

Raptors assistant coach suffers stroke

TORONTO —Toronto assistant coach Stan Albeck suffered a stroke Sunday about 30 minutes before the Raptors played the Miami Heat.

Albeck, 70, turned red and couldn't talk as the Raptors were about to start a pregame meeting.

"He did have a stroke," Toronto coach Lenny Wilkens said. "He's being evaluated at the hospital right now."

Wilkens had no further information, and a Raptors spokesman added that more might not be known before Monday.

Vince Carter and his teammates witnessed Albeck's stroke.

La Salle netters sweep first-round

DE La Salle fortified its title-bid in the UAAP men's tennis tournament with a first-round sweep last Sunday.

The Green netters of Roland Kraut and Taddy Cruz roiled to their fifth consecutive win following a 2-1 decision over Adamson at the Valle Verde Country Club outdoor courts.

Pop Sabandon outplayed Ariel Tio, 6-2, 6-4, in the first singles to give La Salle a 1-0 lead. Adamson tied the count after Randy Baylon and Albert Dino Marasigan won the doubles over Donn de Dios and Joseph Nicholas Faller, 6-4, 6-4, but Johan Guba saved the day for the Taft-based squad with a 6-0, 6-3 win over Gilbert Sinocruz in the second singles.

University of Santo Tomas finished second with a 4-1 record after pulling off a 3-0 win over Ateneo. The Eagles placed third with three wins and two losses.

Karl Thomas Santamaria outplayed Neil Co, 6-4, 5-7, 6-3; Gabriel Remigio and Art Calingasan rallied past Stanley Ong and Francis Abacan, 4-6, 6-3, 6-1; and Pius Ocampo survived Ronaldo de Guzman, 4-6, 7-5, 6-3.

University of the East downed University of the Philippines, 2-1 to improve its record to 2-3. The UP Maroons absorbed their fourth loss while Adamson is winless in five outings.

Bears beat Redskins, pace NFC Central

LANDOVER, Maryland —Linebacker Brian Urlacher caught a 27-yard touchdown pass, his first career NFL reception, from holder Brad Maynard with 9:55 left Sunday, giving the Chicago Bears a 20-15 victory over the Washington Redskins.

The victory kept the Bears (11-3) in first place in the NFC Central. Coupled with Tampa Bay's 48-21 victory over New Orleans, the Redskins (6-8) were eliminated from playoff contention with their third straight loss at home.

Trailing 20-13, the Redskins had a chance to tie on their final drive. Starting at their 36 with 3:15 remaining, they moved to Chicago's 3. But Stephen Davis was stuffed for no gain on the next play, and two incomplete passes ended the threat with 1:25 remaining.

Maynard ran out of the end zone for a safety with 20 seconds left for the game's final points.

Steelers 47, Lions 14

In Pittsburgh, Kordell Stewart threw for three touchdowns and ran for another as Pittsburgh improved to 12-2 for the first time since 1978 with its seventh straight victory.

The Steelers can wrap up home-field advantage throughout the AFC playoffs by winning next Sunday at Cincinnati. Detroit fell to 1-13.

Mike McMahon, Detroit's rookie quarterback, lost two fumbles and threw an interception in the first 18 minutes. The mistakes led to two touchdowns and a 27-7 Steelers lead.

Bucs 48, Saints 21

In Tampa, Florida, Brad Johnson threw three touchdown passes and Martin Gramatica kicked four field goals before being injured on an extra point as Tampa Bay rebounded from a 24-point road loss to Chicago.

The Bucs (8-6) took a big step toward making the playoffs for the fourth time in five seasons and took a one-game lead over New Orleans (7-7) in the race for an NFC wild-card spot. *AP*

UAAP YEARENDER

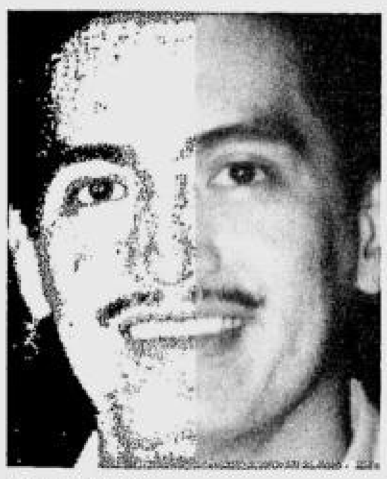
Archers achieve rare 'four-ward'

BY DENNIS U. EROA

MIGHTY La Salle achieved the rare "four-ward" amid off-court distractions that threatened to split the once-solid UAAP family.

This, in a nutshell, was what transpired in the 64th edition of the famed UAAP men's basketball championship. The league hogged sporting headlines pages and generated attention of hysterical proportions from young and old alike.

As Ateneo's search for the prestigious crown after 13 long years got frustrated by La Salle's sharp arrows in the best-of-three title series at the Big Dome, the Archers banked on their unequalled focus to survive what had been headlined as the "Dream Showdown."



PUMAREN

"This season showed the true character of the team. I have to salute my charges for emerging on top," said La Salle coach Franz Pumaren, who won his fourth straight title. He also lauded the heartfelt backing given by team manager Terry Capistrano and assistant Manny Salgado on top of the able guidance provided by University president Br. Rolly Dizon and the alumni association.

The Taft-based Archers did not enter the finals first.

Despite a slow start tainted by Joe Lipa's unsportsmalike outbursts against this reporter, the Blue Eagles entered the finals first. They whipped suddenly lethargic Far Eastern University, while the Green Archers needed a playoff in beting surprising National University in the Final Four.

Aside from facing the Blue Eagles, the Archers also got hit by a move by the UAAP board headed by Anton Montinola of FEU to dig deeper into the academic records of ace rookie Mark Cardona just as the competition was shifting into high gear.

Cardona, selected by the UAAP Press Corps as rookie of the year, survived the test and the all-powerful board was left licking its wounds.

After the Cardona incident, La Salle got the shock of its life when slotman Carlo Sharma was suspended in Game 2 of the series. With a hole in the middle, the Archers, who won Game 1, 74-68, was forced into a decider with a 76-72 setback.

Other Green Archers woes: Majority of the team got hospitalized days after winning Game 1 due to an unknown virus and rising slotman Mike Gavino, forward Miko Vainio and BJ Manalo went down with injuries in the regular season. But Manalo returned in style during the series.

Of course, they figured in a riotous match with the FEU Tamaraws in the second round of eliminations.

La Salle, however, wasn't to be denied. Even without the presence of President Macapagal-Arroyo, who made a last-minute cancellation of what could have been a memorable appearance at the jampacked Big Dome, the Archers escaped with a 93-88 victory on Oct. 16

Still, it was a joyous ending to a tumultuous season.

US speedskaters favored

KEARNS, Utah —With the advantage of skating on their home track, US speedskaters appear certain to leave the Salt Lake City Olympics with more medals than they won at the 1998 Nagano Games.

Fred Benjamin, the president of U.S. Speedskating, said the Americans hope for an unprecedented medal haul at the Salt Lake Games.

"We could come home with 10 medals," he said after the U.S. Olympic trials ended Saturday evening. "We feel on top of the world right now."

Ten medals would be quite a feat, considering the Americans have never won more than eight speedskating medals in a single Olympics. That occurred in 1980, when Eric Heiden brought home five golds himself.

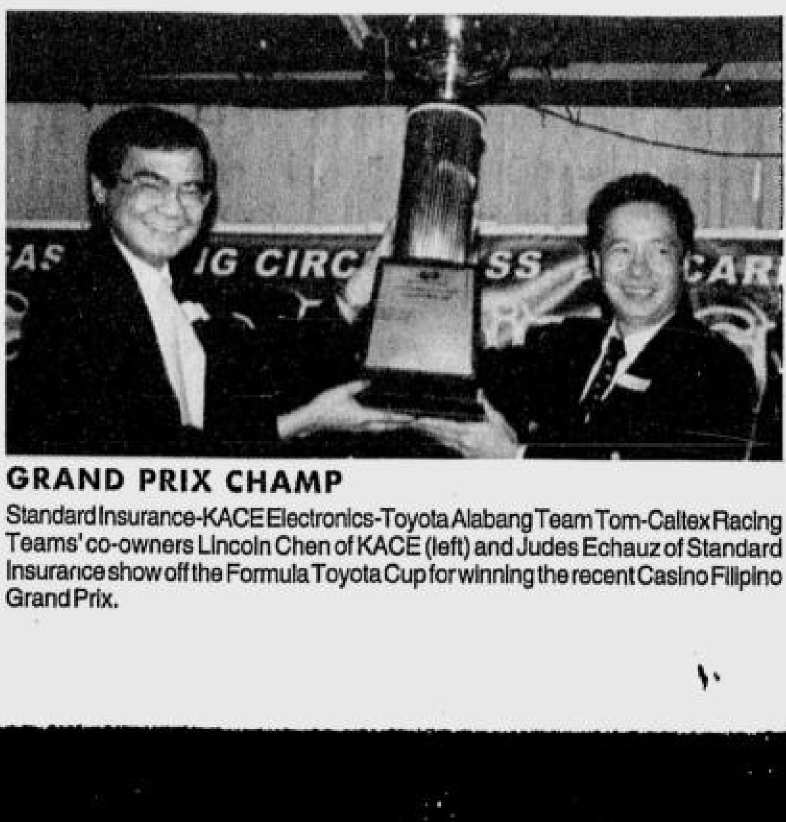
Four years ago in Nagano, the Americans were held to a mere two speedskating medals, both captured by Chris Witty, neither a gold.

Nineteen-year-old Apolo Anton Ohno, the defending World Cup short-track champion, could win more than two medals. He'll be one of the favorites in four events: the 500 meters, 1,000, 1,500 and relay.

"Apolo can medal in every race," Benjamin said.

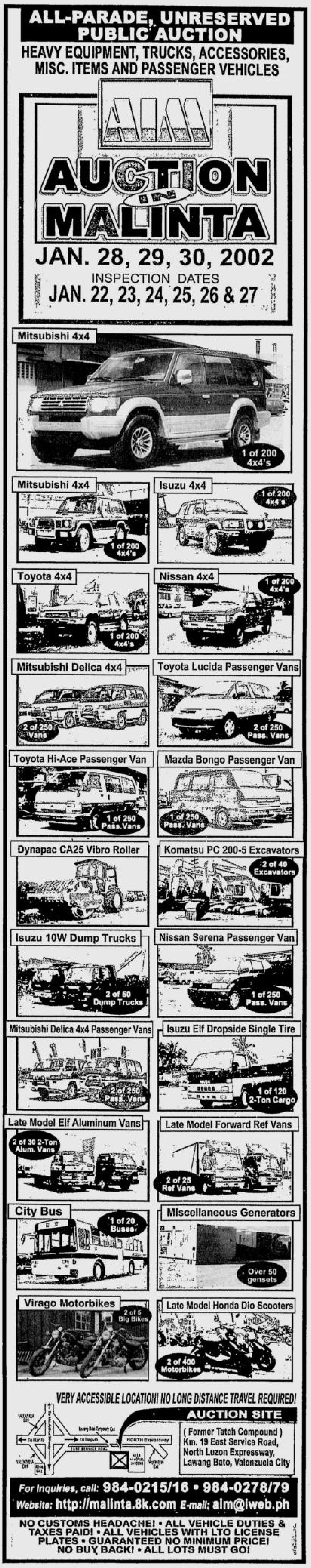
The long-track team also is loaded with potential medal candidates, including Witty, Casey FitzRandolph, Jennifer Rodriguez, Derek Parra and Joey Cheek.

Rodriguez, a former inliner from Miami, gave up her spot in the 500 - even though she holds the American record in that event—for a chance to compete in the four longer races. *AP*



GRAND PRIX CHAMP

Standard Insurance-KACE Electronics-Toyota Alabang Team Tom-Caltex Racing Teams' co-owners Lincoln Chen of KACE (left) and Judes Echauz of Standard Insurance show off the Formula Toyota Cup for winning the recent Casino Filipino Grand Prix.



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Dynapac CA25 Vibro Roller
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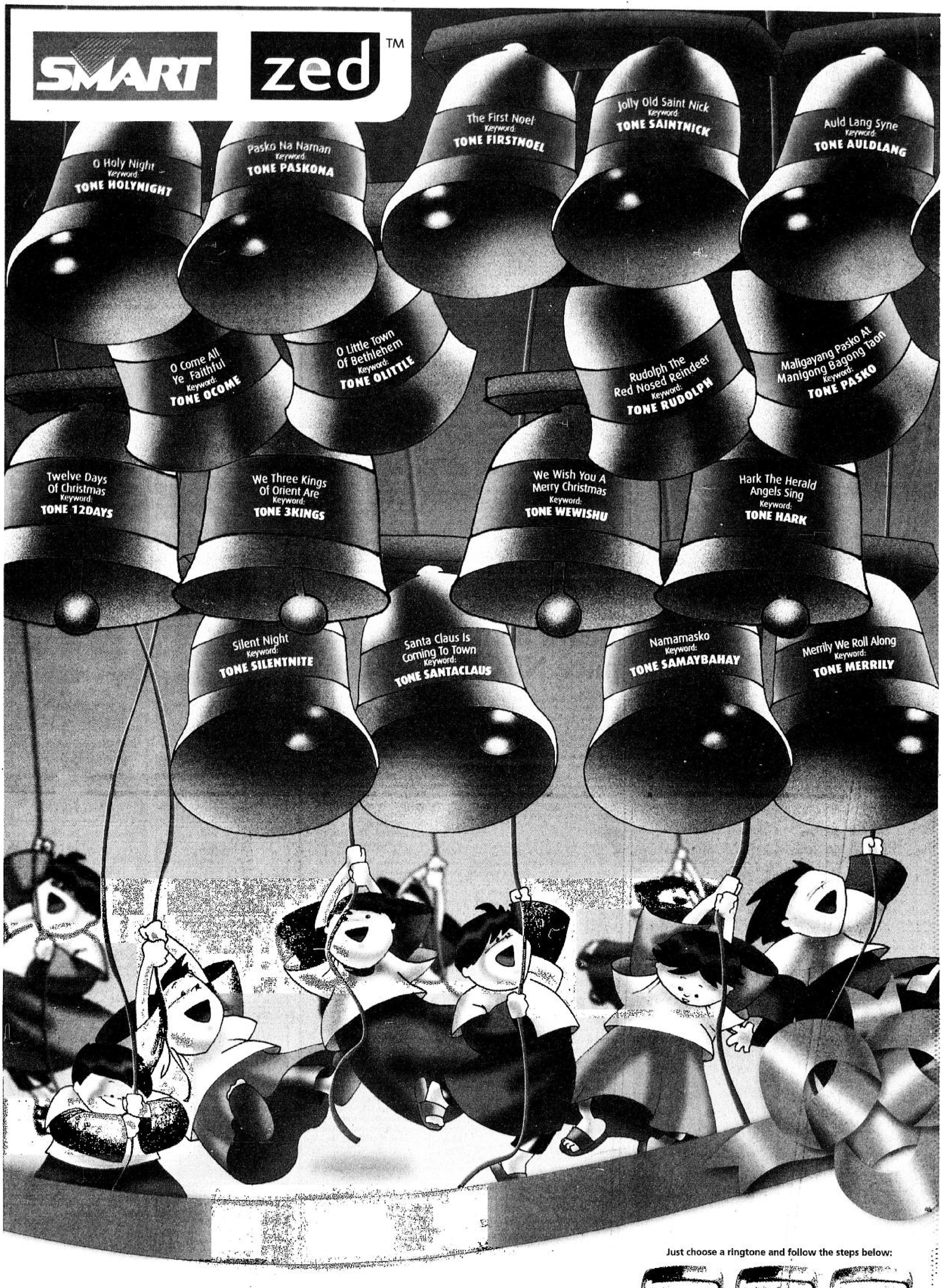
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Keyword:
TONE SAINTNICK
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Keyword:
TONE AULDLANG
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Keyword:
TONE OCOME
O Little Town Of Bethlehem
Keyword:
TONE OLITTLE
Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer
Keyword:
TONE RUDOLPH
Maligayang Pasko At Manigong Bagong Taon
Keyword:
TONE PASKO
Twelve Days Of Christmas
Keyword:
TONE 12DAYS
We Three Kings Of Orient Are
Keyword:
TONE 3KINGS
We Wish You A Merry Christmas
Keyword:
TONE WEWISHU
Hark The Herald Angels Sing
Keyword:
TONE HARK
Silent Night
Keyword:
TONE SILENTNITE
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Keyword:
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Namamasko
Keyword:
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Merrily We Roll Along
Keyword:
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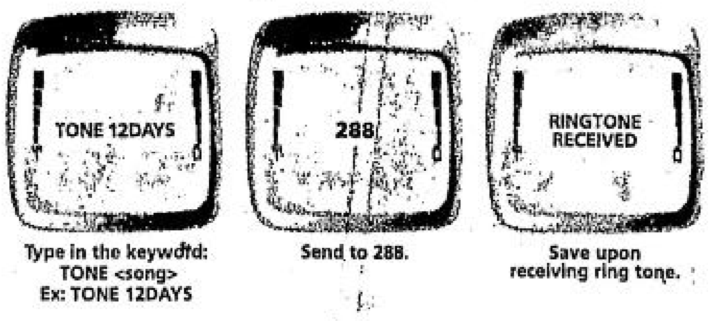
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METRO
LOUIE C. CAMINO, Editor

■ Half-a-kilo of ham for Christmas A18
■ On Target: Get involved in fighting crime A18

GMA-7 lawyer takes maid's case vs Korina

BY ALCUIN PAPA AND CHRISTIAN V. ESGUERRA

SANCHEZ

MORE bad news for ABS-CBN news reader and talk show host Korina Sanchez.

Sanchez may be facing attempted homicide charges for allegedly beating her maid Bernardita Inocencio, 42, who filed a complained against her on Friday, according to lawyer Melanio "Batas" Mauricio of GMA 7, rival network of ABS-CBN.

But in a phone interview yesterday with Inquirer, Sanchez laughed off this latest development, saying, "That's really funny. I was not even in the area when the supposed incident happened. And the police reports will bear that out. But I'll see them in court."

She said she was not taking Innocencio's charges seriously and described them as illusions of the maid.

Mauricio said he had agreed to take on the case of Inocencio against Sanchez free of charge after a certain Aling Virginia, who identified herself as Inocencio's aunt, called him up yesterday morning seeking legal assistance.

The charges could be Innocencio's attempt to extort money from Sanchez, said Ronnie Olalia, who called up the Inquirer about an hour after the phone interview with Sanchez. Identifying himself as a close friend of Sanchez, Olalia said he was calling upon the request of Sanchez, who had forgotten to mention the alleged attempt by Innocencio and her relatives to extort money from her.

He said Inocencio had asked Sanchez for money in exchange for not filing the case. He said the two talked at the time Inocencio filed her complaint with the Makati police.

Olalia said Inocencio asked Sanchez to give her a month's salary, plus another month's wages

GMA-7 LAWYER/ A18

Witness says gunshots came from Strawberry's boyfriend

BY CHRISTIAN V. ESGUERRA

THE shots that killed former child actress Strawberry came from the group of her boyfriend Mark Doromal, a witness told Las Piñas police.

Insp. Sergio Gaarrobo, Station Investigation Division chief, said the witness' account bolstered initial police theory that the group of Doromal could have accidentally killed Strawberry, whose real name is Anouk Baldo.

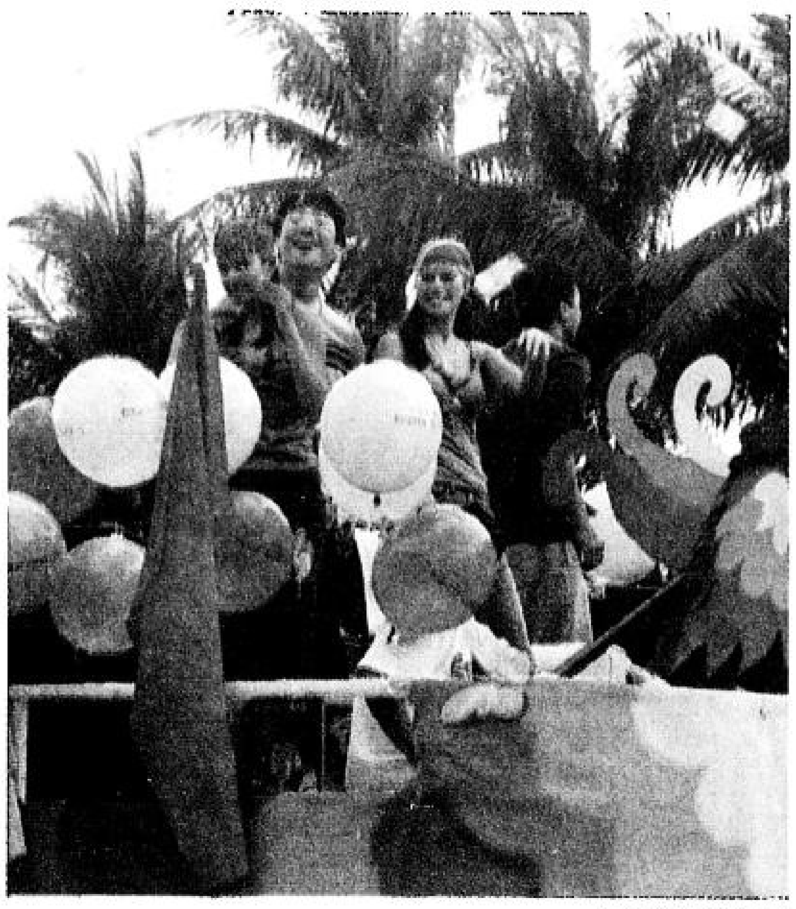
Strawberry died two days after she was shot in the head during a traffic altercation involving her boyfriend Doromal and the family of businessman Raynaldo Picar. She was 25.

Doromal surfaced a few days after the incident and blamed the Picars for the tragedy.

But the witness confirmed the Picars' version of the incident on Tuesday, which stemmed from a petty argument over traffic two days earlier, Gaarrobo yesterday told the Inquirer. He said the witness claimed the Picars and Doromol's group that included Strawberry had a heated argument at the gate of BF Executive Village early last Tuesday, and that Doromal lured the Picars to run after him toward a dark portion near the village gate.

When the Picars fell for the ruse, the witness

WITNESS SAYS/ A18



JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

ASSUNTA de Rossi still shapely even in jeans for "Hubog."

Metro filmfest off to a floaty start

BY LEAH SALTERIO

ANOTHER colorful and star-studded parade on Roxas Boulevard ushered in this year's Metro Manila Film Festival yesterday afternoon.

Seven floats which represented the official entries to this year's filmfest carried the respective stars of the movies, to be shown starting today until Jan. 3.

The traditional parade kicked off with the destruction of thousands of pirated VCDs—crushed under the weight of three huge steamrollers—to signify the support of the Manila Metropolitan Development Authority to the anti-piracy campaign of the Videogram Regulatory Board.

The MMDA, under chair Benjamin Abalos, is the organization behind the filmfest.

Abalos appealed to the public to stop buying pirated copies of local and foreign movies.

"These pirated VCDs are what's killing the local film industry," said Abalos, who also chairs the 2001 filmfest.

"Efforts of our local filmmakers and actors will only go to waste if the public will continue patronizing (pirated products)," Abalos said.

According to the MMDA chair, 20 percent of the proceeds of the filmfest will be used to finance the anti-piracy campaign of the VRB under lawyer Luwalhati Buenafe.

Next year, Abalos said the filmfest will be a nationwide scope, to include the Visayas and Mindanao.

"Next year, we will call it the National Film Festival," Abalos said.

METRO FILMFEST/ A19

WAZZZZUP ?
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Cowboy Grill REMEDIOS ST., MALATE	SERSIDE ICE KENDI	NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎ 521.8143
Cowboy Grill NOVALICHES	MR. ROXY PHYRIGIAN/BEATBOX	NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎ 936.9757
MUSIC WAREHOUSE	X-PROJECT RAVE	735.1405/735.1280
TIA MARIA'S JUPITER ST., MAKATI CITY	SPECIAL EDITION SOUDSTREAM	RETROSPECT DEC. 27 ☎ 890.4735
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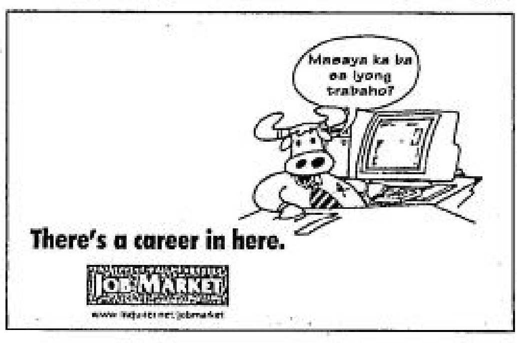

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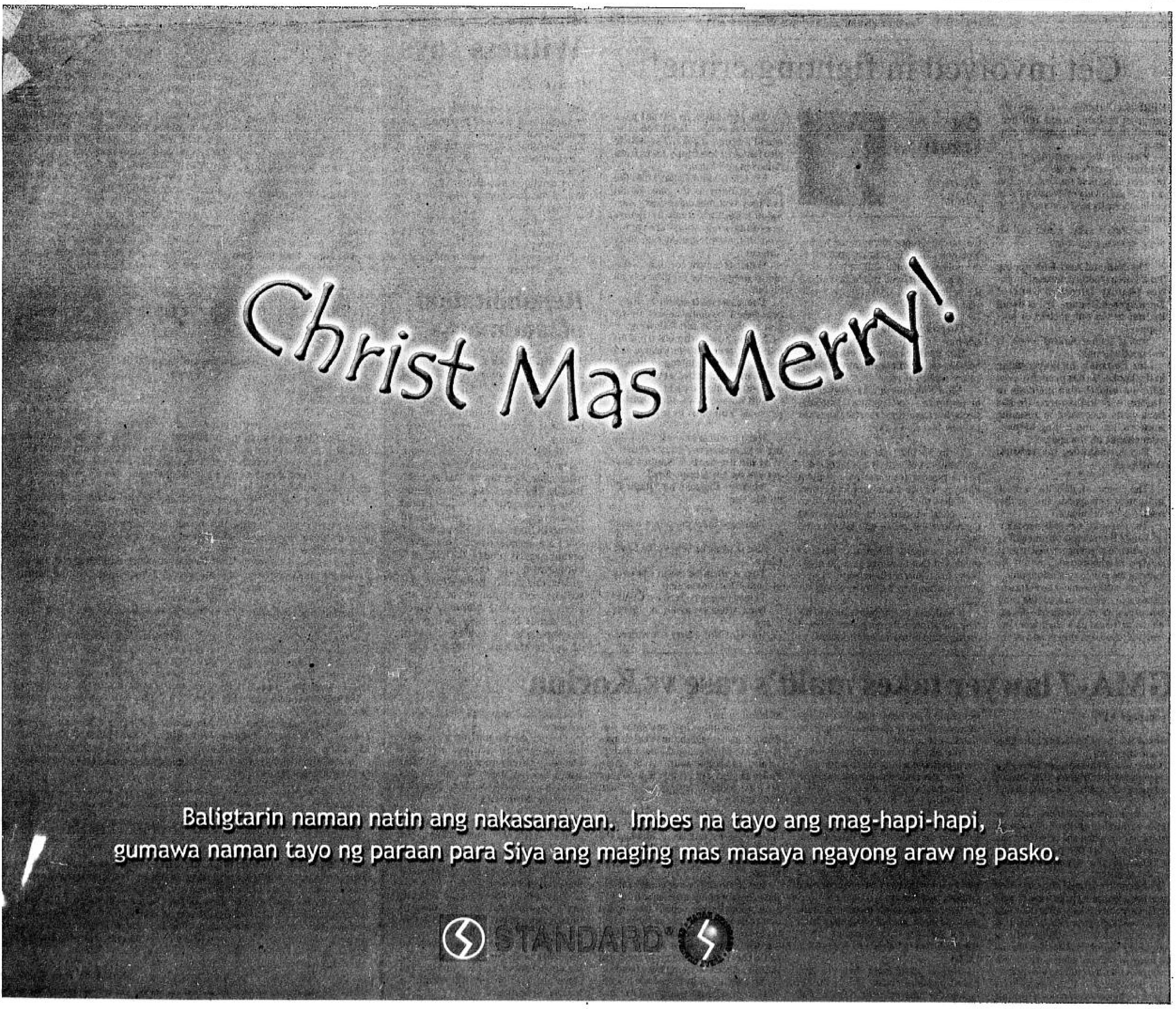

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STANDARD

Half-a-kilo of ham for Christmas

By Jerome Aning

MANG Lorenzo's employer, a garments manufacturer in Valenzuela City only becomes generous on two occasions—on his birthday and during the Christmas season.

It's during Christmas that the 36-year-old Mang Lorenzo receives a half-kilo of smoked ham from his employer, and he's thankful for the gift. He and his family would feast on the ham for the traditional noche buena on Christmas Eve, aside from the bibingka that his wife Melissa loves to make.

"Last year, it was a P1,000 Christmas bonus that he gave us," said Mang Lorenzo of the employer whom he did not name. "But now, he says no more cash gifts."

After Yuletide, Mang Lorenzo will return to work and join about two dozen other employees who are clandestinely organizing a union, under the auspices of a militant group to force their employer to give them more benefits.

Mang Lorenzo said the employer has claimed that the company's earnings have been wiped out in a fire that razed a section of the firm and the hijacking of a container van. But the employees believed this was just an excuse.

"If our employer won't budge, we might as well go back to our province and farm so we would not starve here," said the Benguet-born Mang Lorenzo, who is a father of four, during an interview with the INQUIRER in a 3-meter by 5-meter room, which he rents for P3,000 a month in Sampaloc.

After the rent and the light and water bills are paid, Lorenzo's P8,000 monthly salary could barely buy their daily needs. His four children—three boys aged 11, to and 8, and his 7-year-old daughter—are enrolled at the Legarda Elementary School.

"It's a good thing we live near the school, the children can come home to eat," said Melissa, 33, a college dropout. She wants at least two of her children to finish their studies and help the rest finish theirs.

The eldest child Motmot wants to be a doctor someday, and the youngest hopes to be a teacher.

Mang Lorenzo said they were better off last year when Melissa was a sales agent for various firms and sold lingerie, furniture, pension plans, even *chicharon*. He was then a janitor in a recruitment agency in Malate.

"I would have gone abroad if we had money," he said wistfully, eyeing his wife.

But Melissa's earnings began to dwindle and the couple ran into huge debts to avoid being sued for estafa.

A cousin who had gone abroad for a job offered Mang Lorenzo the job he now holds. He said he grabbed the opportunity of a stable job and patiently bore the long distance he has to travel to Karuhatan Valenzuela for work.

The country's worsening economic crisis had forced the family to impose "austerity measures" on themselves: No electric lights in the afternoon. No television after midnight. The washing machine, which Mang Lorenzo salvaged when he was a janitor would "cease operation until further notice."

This early, the couple has imparted on their children the value of scrimping. Motmot would have only a new pair of shoes for Christmas. The other children would only have new clothes.

The couple said their children inspire them to go on living in the city. Mang Lorenzo said he does not want to lose hope and faith in God with the poverty they are now experiencing.

"But it would be better if He sends an angel to tell my employer we need a raise."

The store that ham built

By Maricris Irene
V. Tamolang

Adelina's Ham
Since 1955
OPEN TO SERVE YOU
DUCTS ALSO AVAILABLE AT:
MALL - G/F COR. 2 (INFRONT OF FRUITSTAND)
NG CENTER, GREENHILLS, SAN JUAN
MAKATI-FOOD COURT

ADELINA'S hams sell like hotcakes during Christmas. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

PART of Filipino Christmas tradition is the succulent ham served in even the humblest home for noche buena.

Forty-six years ago, Vicente Uy, husband to Adelina Homo, a native of Sorsogon, sought to discover a better formula for the ubiquitous ham.

The secret formula created by Vicente, now 72, has captured the Filipinos' taste and brought to life Adelina's Ham store in 1955.

For more than four decades, Adelina's Ham at 180 General Kalentong corner P. Martinez St. in Mandaluyong, has kept the tradition alive with its high-quality meat products. Starting as a small-scale grocery store owned by Vicente's wife, Adelina, the store has grown into a widely known ham outlet specializing in homemade honey-cured and smoked ham.

"It was my father's idea to sell ham as an add-on product to our mini-grocery," said Lily Chiam, eldest child of the couple. "He started cooking 1 to 2 kilos of ham a day using a cauldron and experimented on the taste by adding homemade sauce.

"Then, orders would only come by slices from buyers who wanted it for their sandwiches and from restaurants. For 100 grams, the ham was sold for only 80 cents at that time and leftovers would even become part of our dinner," she said.

Amazingly, the side product became popular through time and has since taken over as the store's specialty. Word of mouth brought in more customers, their number increasing as the ham's popularity grew, attracting even show biz personalities.

One of the first celebrities to patronize the meat product was the late Helen Vela, according to Chiam. The likes of Vilma Santos and couple Fernando Poe Jr. and Susan Roces also became customers.

During the first stage of the business, the eight children of the family participated in the operation. After school, the children would help man the small store, which was just an extension of the Uys two-story house in Mandaluyong. But Adelina's Ham store has become a family business that was eventually passed on even to the third generation of Uys. Soon, it would be the fourth generation, which would be active in the business.

"Now, our children also take part in the business during Christmas season," Chiam said. "They help in selling because the month of December has always been our peak season."

But the all-year-round meat product has also extended its reach to big companies, which usually place orders in great volumes to be given out as giveaways. Landmark supermarket has also become one of Adelina's dealers for the month of December.

Vicente, who was from Amoy, China, still supervises the cooking, and Adelina is still the owner of the store. The store was named after Adelina for Vicente believed his wife's name was good luck, related their eldest child Chiam.

Storekeepers are Chiam's younger sisters Evelyn and Emily who both take orders and are the cashiers.

"Starting the first day of December, orders come by thousands till the end of the month," Chiam said. "Ordinary days would have us 10-20 legs prepared daily."

The Mandarin-speaking family has only 10 people operating the store during ordinary days. But during the peak season, they need at least 35 people for the cooking and slicing, which are done manually, and the storekeeping.

The store's suppliers are from Pasay and from Davao, said Chiam.

"Adelina's Ham is known not for the presentation of its product but by its taste," Chiam said. "Our selling price for sliced ham is P540 per kilo, and P450 a kilo for our boneless ham and bone-in ham." They also take orders for delivery, but this is only possible for nearby areas like San Juan and Makati.

Curing time for boneless ham would only take days, while for the bone-in ham, curing takes months, Chiam said. This is the reason why their bone-in ham is more expensive than the boneless one. But she said boneless ham is much better as a gift, while sliced ham is only good for home consumption.

Apparently, patience is the key to the business' success. And though the couple's children have their own families now, the business is still an Uy family affair that keeps them close, especially during Christmas when they really work as one.

QC official urges residents to keep city streets clean

QUEZON City Administrator for External Affairs Robert C. Nacianceno has called on city residents to help keep the city clean especially during this Christimas season.

Nacianceno reminded residents that traffic is heavier during the Christmas season, which is a major cause of the delay in the arrival of garbage trucks.

If garbage is just put out on the streets, chances are waste will spill onto the streets or scattered by dogs, scavengers and errant vehicle drivers.

To avoid this, Nacianceno urged people to wait until the garbage trucks are already in their immediate area before putting out their garbage.

Nacianceno also encouraged residents to make sure that waste is properly segregated and placed in plastic bags. He said this makes it easier and faster for garbage collection.

He also said that residents could help minimize the volume of waste by recycling as much as possible.

Plans are being finalized for the implementation next year of Quezon City Mayor Feliciano R. Belmonte Jr.'s program requiring cleanup of street fronts of all homes and shops in the city at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. every day, Nacianceno revealed. He said residents and business owners should now begin to make it a habit to clean the frontages of their homes and shops daily.

In connection with the city's ongoing efforts to lighten the traffic situation, Nacianceno said plans are already under way to put up steel and concrete girdles along portions of Commonwealth Avenue to help discourage vendors from clogging the road with their wares and impeding the vehicular and pedestrian flow.

Mayor Belmonte is aware of the influx into the city of vendors from Rizal, Bulacan and especially Mindanao, Nacianceno said, emphasizing that the city government is intent on ridding the city sidewalks of vendors, as it has successfully done in Cubao.

"We want to make the city as safe and convenient as possible for both pedestrians and motorists," he said.

Get involved in fighting crime!

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

HERE'S a Christmas wish every citizen most probably wants fulfilled: an end to the kidnappings for ransom.

Well-known dermatologist Dr. Vinzons Pineda's Angela, 14, was released unharmed on Dec. 15. But not after the owner of a chain of skin clinic reportedly paid a ransom of P16 million!

For Pete's sake, when will all these kidnappings stop!

* * *

The National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktaf), headed by police Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., is doing its best to rid our society of kidnappers.

But it seems Naktaf's best is not good enough.

Jun Ebdane is doing everything in the books. He has probably even adopted unorthodox methods in dealing with kidnappers. He has been quite successful in rescuing some victims and killing kidnappers caught on the spot.

But kidnapping for ransom continues.

* * *

The police can only do so much in fighting kidnappers, and for that matter, other criminals.

The citizenry's help is needed.

How? If you report to the police the presence of strangers or new faces in your neighborhood, you will be helping the police spot criminals.

If you notice some out-of-the-ordinary activities in an enclosed compound in your neighborhood—for example, different cars, their windows heavily tinted, coming in and out of the garage—report them to the police. You don't have to identify yourself to the police, just what you've noticed.

Who knows, you might be helping the police stumble on a criminal syndicate.

* * *

There's a saying that crime does not pay.

But in this country, crime pays because the apathetic or cowardly citizenry makes it so.

Most Filipinos don't report crime or testify in court against crime suspects because they're either afraid or they just don't care.

* * *

"Why should I get involved when my family or relative is not involved?" is the typical response by a typical Pinoy to why he doesn't report a crime.

Unless the typical Filipino acquires civic-consciousness in his dealings with his fellowmen, crime will keep on rising.

The apathetic Filipino is best reminded of that beautiful passage in the Elegy in a Country Churchyard: "Don't ask for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee."

If he doesn't contribute a little of his time and effort in fighting crime, he will one day find himself a crime victim.

* * *

The INQUIRER, in a front page story recently, featured the world's funniest joke. The article also featured less funny jokes from America and Europe.

My friends and I didn't find the jokes as funny as the ones found in Pinoy text messages every day. Some jokes dished out by Pinoys are funny while others are corny. And still, others are outrageously indecent.

When it comes to jokes—ribald or decent—the Filipino has no equal.

The most outrageously indecent joke I've come across on my text messages is the following:

Young punk, who has dyed his hair blue, green, white, yellow, and red, to old man staring at him: "Whasamatta, oldie, never did a wild thing when you were young?"

Old man: "Yeah, did it with a peacock. You must be my son."

* * *

Here's one joke—also among my text messages—that's timely: Why did the pants of Santa Claus get wet on Christmas Eve?

Answer: Because he "jingled" all the way.

* * *

There are four stages in a man's life.

One is when he believes in Santa Claus.

Two is when he doesn't believe in Santa Claus anymore.

Three is when he is Santa Claus.

Four, when he looks like Santa Claus.

Ho! Ho! Ho! Merry Christmas!

Witness says . . .

(From page A17)

said that gunshots were fired coming from the direction of Doromol's group, Gaarrobo said.

The Picars had told police that they retreated back to the village gate where they chanced upon Strawberry driving a Mitsubishi Lancer toward the dark portion where her boyfriend had run.

The witness told police more shots were fired, hitting the car Strawberry was driving, Gaarrobo said. He added that police found at the scene at least three empty shells of a 12-gauge shotgun. A 12-gauge shotgun is the type of firearm usually issued to security guards, Gaarrobo pointed out. Doromal's father allegedly owns a security agency.

A day after the incident, the Picars went to the Las Pinas police headquarters and volunteered to undergo paraffin tests to prove that they did not fire any shot.

Doromal's supposed companions—security guards Mark Arabani and Felicisimo Mardarlipe—surfaced two days later to undergo similar tests, Gaarrobo said.

Rehabilitation of landmarks

THE SECRETARY of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has announced that he would push for more government support in the rehabilitation of natural landmarks.

DENR Secretary Heherson "Sonny" Alvarez made the announcement after recent news that said the Banaue Rice Terraces has been placed in the "endangered list" of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco).

"I am saddened with this development and I pledge the DENR's cooperation and resources in ensuring that future generations will still be able to marvel at this ancient engineering wonder, which also stands imposingly as a proud monument to the genius and skill of our forefathers," Alvarez said.

GMA-7 lawyer takes maid's case vs Korina

(From page A17)

as bonus and the gift Sanchez had allegedly promised her.

Olalia also denied Sanchez had called Inocencio at the Makati City police headquarters to settle the case amicably.

Inocencio accused Sanchez and her supposed boyfriend Paul Aquino of beating her up when she told them she wanted to leave, in a two-page complaint she filed with the Makati City police over the weekend.

Innocencio claimed Sanchez had duped her into signing papers and having her fingerprints taken after she and Aquino beat her up on Friday. She said in her complaint that two police officers brought her to Fort Bonifacio were she was made to sign the papers, and where her fingerprints and pictures were taken.

At the Makati police headquarters on Sunday, Inocencio expressed fear that she could have been made to undergo the procedure to implicate her in a crime she did not commit.

She said she was not allowed to read the papers she was made to sign.

Inocencio said she did not even finish second year high school.

Officers at the Women's and Children's Concern Desk expressed concern that Inocencio could have been subjected to the procedure to discredit her complaint against Sanchez.

Inocencio said in her complaint that she suffered a swollen left elbow and two lumps in the head after Sanchez and Aquino beat her up.

She said the couple insulted, humiliated and threw her out of Aquino's unit at the Bel-Air Condominium on P. Burgos Street in Poblacion, Makati last Friday.

She said that more than the supposed physical abuse, she could not endure the "internal pain" Sanchez had inflicted on her.

In a radio interview on dzMM yesterday, Sanchez said she had filed charges of qualified theft and malicious mischief against Inocencio with the Southern Police District last Friday. She claimed she lost a piece of jewelry worth about P200,000.

Sanchez vowed she would push for an investigation of the qualified theft charges against Inocencio. She said she would also file corresponding charges against Inocencio "for causing this trouble."

Inocencio said in her complaint that she asked for police assistance from 117 even before Sanchez could send for the two policemen who allegedly brought her to Fort Bonifacio. She said she asked the officers who responded to her 117 call to check her belongings to prove that she did not steal anything from Sanchez.

Sanchez allegedly fumed when a condominium security guard told her that Inocencio had requested for police assistance.

One of the responding policemen told Inocencio that Sanchez had cursed him and ordered him to leave, the maid said in her complaint. She said the policeman was calling Sanchez through a telephone downstairs.

GMA-7 broadcaster and lawyer Mauricio said he would take Inocencio's case even if it were not Sanchez who was involved.

"GMA is not part of this," Mauricio stressed. "It is my legal professional life that is involved here."

He clarified that he was not instigating a network war between the two broadcasting giants when he agreed to act as legal counsel for Inocencio.

He said that based on initial reports, he could already file a case of attempted homicide against Sanchez and Aquino since "there is a possibility of death" in the alleged beatings.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, December 25, 2001
Christmas

1st Reading:	**Is 52:7-10**
2nd Reading:	**Heb 1:1-6**
Gospel:	**Jn 1:1-5, 9-14**

In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God; he was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without him nothing came to be. Whatever has come to be, found life in him, life which for humans was also light.

Light that shines in the dark: light that darkness could not overcome. For the Light that enlightens everyone.

He was already in the world and through him the world was made, the very world that did not know him. He came to his own, yet his own people did not receive him; but all who received him he empowers to become children of God for they believe in his Name. These are born, but without seed or carnal desire or will of man: they are born of God.

And the Word was made flesh; he had his tent pitched among us, and we have seen his Glory, the Glory of the only Son coming from the Father: fulness of truth and loving-kindness.

Commentary

It can be said that tonight God manifested his Goodness. In a world that is built and continues to be built on the violence of the powerful, God appears as love and kindness. God himself becomes helpless, dependent and powerless. Could there be another meaning in the image reflected in a little boy lying in a manger? And this is how exactly he will save us, through his love that is void of power and through his goodness that is vulnerable. It is just the look of a little boy. Nothing more. Will the world realize some day that in this little boy is the same God who extends his hand to us? That this is the only hand that can save us?

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

REMEDIAL LAW (CIVIL PROCEDURE0—*Res adjudicata*—It is established doctrine that for *res adjudicate* to apply, the following requisites must concur: (1) the former judgment or order must be final; (2) the court which rendered said judgment or order must have jurisdiction over the subject matter and the parties; (3) said judgment or order must be on the merits; and (4) there must be between the first and second actions identity of parties, subject matter and cause of action. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Kapunan, First Division, Sandoval Shipyards, Inc. v. Pepito, G.R. No. 143428, June 25, 2001]

DIGEST BY R.B. VERA

Metro filmfest off to a floaty start

(From page A17)

Caloocan City Mayor Rey Malonzo, chair of the festival's screening committee, noted that the entries this year are all quality movies.

"The films are really something to be proud of," Malonzo said. "The public will finally get to see quality productions which can even be shown abroad."

The seven productions that made it to this year's festival tried to outshine each other with their respective floats.

Thousands lined up the long stretch of Roxas Boulevard on both sides to get a glimpse of the stars on the floats.

A makeshift house carried Gina Alajar, Aiza Seguerra, Manilyn Reynes and other stars of Regal Films' horror-fantasy entry, "Bahay ni Lola."

The President's son Mikey Macapagal-Arroyo-with the president's bodyguards in tow-rode on the float of E-Corp Films' "Hindi Kita Ma-Reach," with his leading lady LJ Moreno.

Japanese soldiers, bogus fighter planes, faux gold bullions and a huge Golden Buddha competed for attention with the stars of MaQ Films' "Yamashita, The Tiger's Treasure."

Albert Martinez, Rustom Padilla, Danilo Barrios, Camille Prats and Carlo Mu¤oz rode on a float which resembled a World War II ship.

Cesar Montano and his costars in Star Cinema's "Bagong Buwan"—Amy Austria, Caridad Sanchez, Carlo Aquino and Jodi Sta. Maria—donned Muslim attire as they waved from Star Cinema's float, which was a replica of a Maranaw house.

Jericho Rosales, meanwhile, slipped into his camouflage outfit and carried a gun, for his role as a soldier in the Marilou Diaz-Abaya epic.

And along comes Assunta

On the float of Golden Harvest Films' "Hubog," sexy actress Assunta de Rossi was in denim jeans and a figure-hugging top, which contrasted that "bold" look she projected in Joel Lamangan's opus.

The lead actors of Maverick Films' "Hesusmaryosep (4 Fathers)"—Bobby Andrews, Polo Ravales, Bojo Molina and Gerald Madrid—were in priestly garb to reprise their roles in the movie.

Rica Peralejo recreated the erotic dance rituals of "Tatarin," based on Nick Joaquin's classic play, on the float of Viva Films' official entry.

The film's lead actress, Dina Bonnevie, was clad in a Maria Clara attire and sat on a throne at the center of the float. Also in period costume was another "Tatarin" star, Patricia Javier.

The crowd endured the mid-afternoon heat while they waited for the filmfest stars on floats.

The parade, which started at the CCP Complex, proceeded to Roxas Boulevard, MIA Road, and on to T.M. Kalaw, culminating at the Quirino Grandstand in Rizal Park, where entertainers put on a show for the viewing public.

The filmfest organizers built makeshift platforms in strategic portions on Roxas Boulevard, where broadcast personalities covered the parade as it aired live on RPN 9.

Comedians Arnel Ignacio and Marissa Sanchez hosted from the PICC platform, while Smokey Manaloto covered from the corner of Roxas Boulevard and MIA Road.

The program at the Quirino Grandstand was hosted by German Moreno and Candy Pangilinan.

The best float, which will receive the top prize of P250,000, will be announced at the "Gabi ng Parangal" awards night on Dec. 27.

THE TIGER'S TREASURE
4

JAPANESE soldiers, bogus fighter planes and faux gold bullions aboard a float which resembles a World War II ship for "Yamashita, The Tiger's Treasure."

"BAGONG Buwan" stars Cesar Montano (seated) and Jericho Rosales wave from their Muslim-inspired float.

PHOTOS BY JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

DINA Bonnevie (extreme left) goes classical on the float of "Tatarin."

"BAHAY ni Lola" provides the scare with its filmfest float.

Killed for no known reason

By Agnes E. Donato

POLICE are now hunting down six of seven suspects who shot dead a man in Quezon City early yesterday morning.

Police said Roderick Kam, 26, a utility worker and resident of Barangay Paraiso, Quezon City was shot in the chest on Paraiso Street, Barangay Paraiso about 2 a.m. yesterday, and died while he was being treated at the Quezon City General Hospital.

Police have so far arrested only one of the seven suspects, Angelito Gabriel, 24.

Kam was reportedly on his way home with witness Richard Alday when seven armed men on board a tricycle stopped them, police said.

For some unknown reason, the men allegedly fired on the victim and fled when they saw that Kam was hit in the chest.

Alday managed to bring Kam to the hospital, but the victim died while undergoing surgery.

Central Police District lawmen conducted an operation and arrested Gabriel at his house in San Francisco del Monte in Quezon City.

Gabriel, now detained at the Camp Karingal, refused to make any comments on the incident.

LRTA to start on Cavite rail line

CONSTRUCTION work on the 12-kilometer light rail transit from Baclaran, Pasay City to Bacoor, Cavite, will start early next year to declog traffic on the busy Coastal Road and Aguinaldo Highway, Transportation Secretary Pantaleon Alvarez said.

"The 550,000-passenger capacity of the LRT will greatly reduce travel time that dissipates working time and reduces worker productivity," Alvarez said.

According to the head of the Department of Transportation and Communications, Cavite hosts more than 1,000 companies at its various economic and special zones. Those who work there commute daily from various points in Metro Manila.

The Cabinet's Investment and Coordinating Committee and the National Economic and Development Authority approved the implementation agreement between the Light Rail Transit Authority and the SNC Lavelin of Canada, paving the way for the construction of the $847-million project.

Alvarez said the Cavite rail transit project will ease traffic in Metro Manila, including Edsa, as Cavite commuters can interlink with the existing LRT in Baclaran and the MRT on Taft Avenue in Pasay.

With the full operation of the Cavite LRT and other LRT extensions, such as the Pasig City extension, there will be a reduction of buses plying on Edsa once commuters start to take the LRT.

Alvarez said the DOTC may complete the Cavite rail line from Baclaran to Sucat, Parañaque before its 2004 deadline.

The second and third phases of the project, covering about 15 kilometers from Dr. Santos Avenue in Parañaque to Imus and Dasmariñas in Cavite, are scheduled to be finished in 2005.

"Right-of-way negotiations are slowing down the project," Alvarez said. "In time, however, we will find the proper accommodation with landowners and inaugurate vital service for commuters."

Van missing

THE KIA Carnival van of a public relations practitioner, and the driver were reported missing on Thursday night.

Jan Mata, who is connected with the office of Senator Manny Villar, told the Philippine National Police's Traffic Management Group that he had instructed his driver, Romeo Mampang, to deliver gifts to the Senate at 10 a.m. on Thursday.

Mampang, who was driving Mata's gray Kia Carnival (JVM-499), proceeded to Las Piñas from the Senate, to deliver more presents as well as to wait for a package.

Mata's last contact with his driver was on the radio. The driver told Mata he was on his way to the Pacific Place office of Senator Villar in Ortigas Center, Pasig about 7 p.m.

TMG chief Supt. Renato Paredes has already put out an alert for the missing vehicle. Police suspected car thieves might have taken the vehicle, along with the driver.

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1:00 PM - CHRISTMAS DAY
- Mardigras Dance Exhibition
- Hataw Sayaw Street Dancing
- Clowns on Stilts, Fire Eaters
- Jugglers, Acrobats
5:00 PM - CHRISTMAS MAGIC
DEC. 27 (THURSDAY)
8:00 PM - GIMMICK NIGHT WITH *RETROSPECT*
DEC. 28 (FRIDAY)
8:00 PM - HIMIG SIKAN & HATAW SAYAW CHAMPIONS SHOWDOWN
DEC. 29 (SATURDAY)
8:00 PM - NEW YEAR PRESENTATION WITH MTV AWARDEE... *TRUE FAITH!*
DEC. 30 (SUNDAY)
7:00 PM - *"THE BOSS"* IN CONCERT & STAR RECORDS' *BOYZTOWN*
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TATARIN — Dina Bonnevie, Edu Manzano
YAMASHITA — Danilo Barrios, Camille Prats
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Ally McBeal on E Channel

E! premieres an original special, "All About Ally," which focuses on the TV hit, "Ally McBeal."

Hosted by Jules Asner, the show features interviews with cast members led by Calista Flockhart, with Greg Germann, Portia de Rossi, Jane Krakowski and Peter McNichol.

"All About Ally" traces the success of the series by David E. Kelly. It airs 8:30 p.m. on Dec. 25 on E! Philippines.

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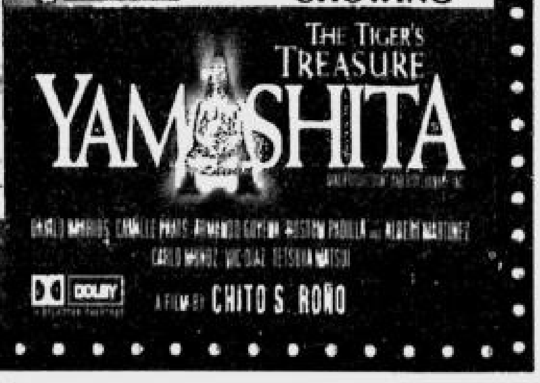

THE TIGER'S TREASURE
YAMASHITA
A FILM BY CHITO S. ROÑO

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ALI MALL CINEPLEX-4 (SDDS)	HARRY POTTER
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FARMERS PLAZA-1(DOLBY)	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
FARMERS PLAZA-2(DOLBY)	PISNGI
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ODEON-2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
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TANDEM-2	SEX EDUCATION
TIMES	PUKYUTAN / STORY OF US
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	CLOSED
ACT-4	CLOSED
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QUEZON-1	PUKYUTAN
REMAR	PISNGI
REMAR-2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	NAIIBANG HAYOP
B	ALIPIN NG TUKSO
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA-2	THE MUSKETEER
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	ROCKSTAR
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CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	THE SCORE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	MONSTER, INC.
CINEMA-6	OTHER SIDE OF THE LAW
CINEMA-7	SUTLA (RI)
CINEMA-8	PISNGI
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER
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CINEMA-11(SDDS)	EARTHQUAKE
CINEMA-12	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
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CINEMA-3	TATARIN
CINEMA-4	YAMASHITA
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CINEMA-6	FOUR FATHERS
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CINEMA-1	
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ENTERTAINMENT

LOUIE C. CAMINO, Editor

Why we should all see 'Bagong Buwan'

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

SOME people have asked us which of this year's Metro filmfest entries (the festival opens today) we plan to see first. Our reply: "Bagong Buwan."

Fact is, we've already seen the film in preview, but we want to see it again because it was such a moving and outlook-changing viewing experience. Also, the film was so full of points it needed to make that we must have missed some of them on first viewing.

That's how it is with any first film about a major national concern, which is what "Bagong Buwan" is in relation to the centuries-old conflict in Mindanao. There are so many biases to overcome, so many layers of deception and mistrust to peel away, so many controversial issues to clear up . . .

Which is not to say that "Bagong Buwan" intends to settle the conflict all by itself. Indeed, while the movie tackles some of the key issues involved, it rigorously takes a personal rather than political or polemical tack, focusing mainly on the refugees who are the war's most helpless victims.

At the same time, filmmaker **Marilou Diaz-Abaya** further localizes the effects of the conflict on a Muslim doctor played by **Cesar Montano**, who starts out as a peace-loving man who thinks he has transcended the internicine war, but eventually finds himself pulled back into the fray, and even doing some shooting and killing himself, in the process.

His return to Mindanao is prompted by the death of his only son in a vigilante raid. Together with his wife (**Amy Austria**) and his mother (**Caridad Sanchez**), he mourns his son's demise, after which he's determined to take them back with him to Manila and once more distance himself from "the problem."

Instructively, the two women don't let him take this easy way out. At the outset, they are more courageous than he is, because they have lived the conflict and know that denial or escape won't make it go away.

Thus, this movie's reluctant hero learns from these resolute heroines—a telling twist in the standard war-action-drama's heroic equation. But this is no ordinary action movie with the usual, readily recognizable heroes and villains. Here, the hero is anybody who decides to act to help alleviate a long-festering wrong, and the villains are prejudice and hate.

Much of the film follows Montano's ragtag band of refugees on their odyssey to a much-longed-for zone of peace. Some viewers may find this part too long, but we feel that its length is part of its intent.

In a conflict as old and complex like this, there can be no facile solutions. Indeed, no solutions at all present themselves at the start of the journey. Like the refugees, we stumble into the light only after a long, seemingly hopeless time spent groping in the dark.

Thus, the film is titled "New Moon," partly to admit to this darkness, this seeming lack of solutions—but also to presage the gradual, brightening moonglow in the days after, as the journey reveals itself to be its ultimate destination.

Some viewers may feel that this movie is too biased in favor of the Muslims, and gives the government and the military relatively short shrift, with the exception of its focus on the enlightened young army officer played by **Jericho Rosales**.

In our view, however, the movie's perceived bias is a necessary one: for a long time now, we've been getting mostly the government's side; now is the time for the Muslim point of view to be given full play, to begin to balance the picture.

We hope that many viewers will watch the film—to excoriate their own biases, to join the long struggle for a just and lasting peace in Mindanao, and to realize for themselves, in afelt and personal way, the vital importance of achieving the true brotherhood of men.

In this season that is supposed to be a time for peace and love—Christmas for Christians and the recently-concluded Ramadan for Muslims—may we genuinely strive to overcome our deeply-ingrained differences and attain the genuine brotherhood of all men.

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YAMASHITA - GP 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:10	BAGONG BUWAN - P 13 12:10, 2:40, 5:10, 7:40, 10;10	FOUR FATHERS - R 18 12:40, 2:55, 5:10, 7:25, 9:40

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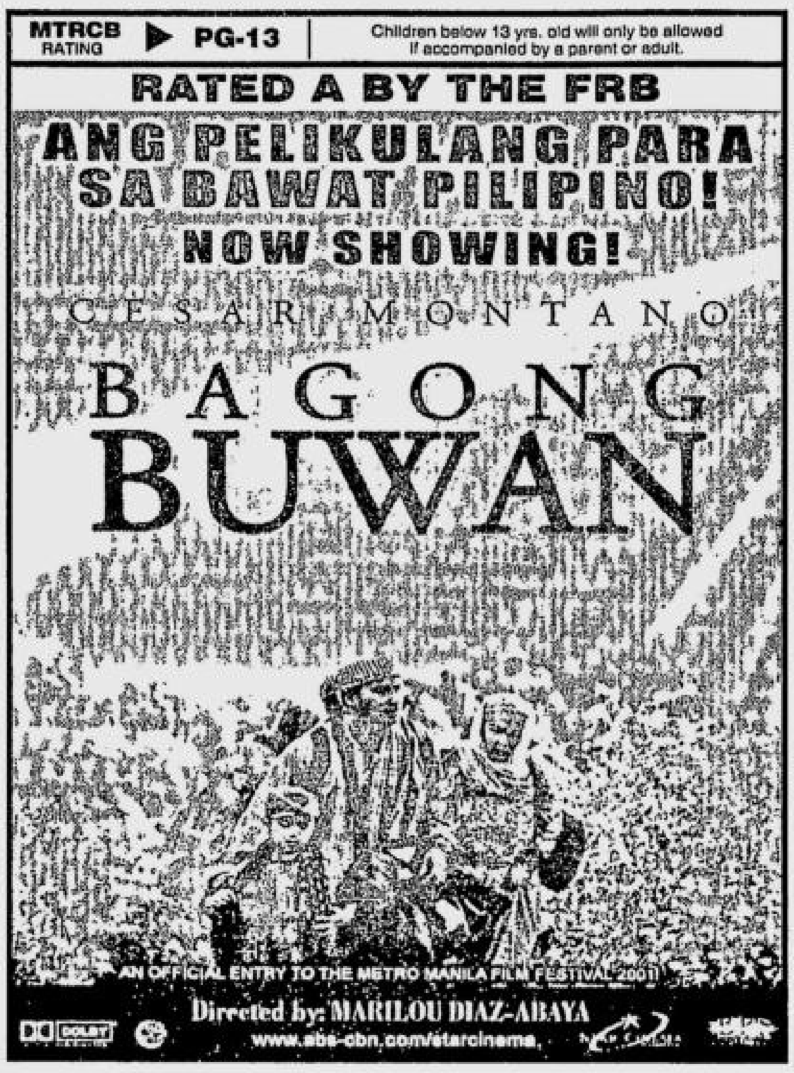

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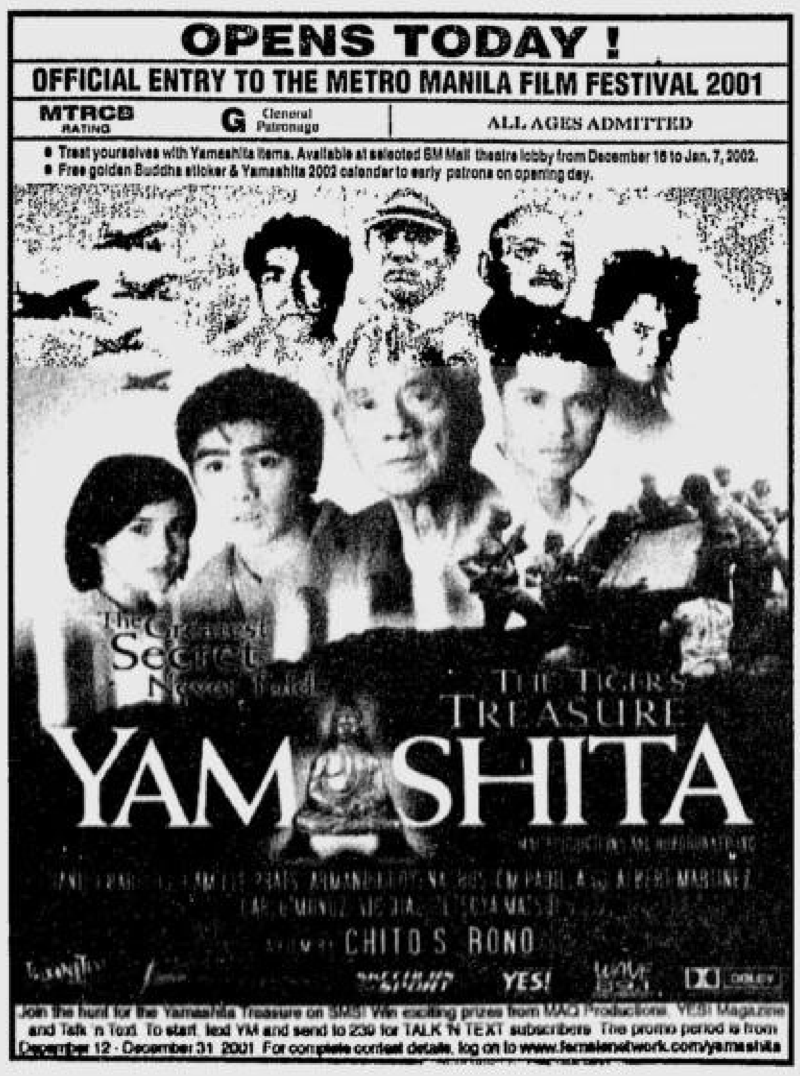

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OPENS TODAY !

OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2001

MTRCB RATING R-18 | Strictly for ADULTS No one below 18 yrs. may be admitted

"...Assunta's boldness goes beyond showing skin; it goes to baring her soul."
-Conrado de Quiros
Philippine Daily Inquirer

UNCOMPROMISING!
"Assunta offers more than sizzling sensuality... and turns in a performance that promises more exciting things."
-Gerard Ramos
Film Reviewer, Today

SEE AND SUPPORT THIS FILM!
This is Joel Lamangan's best! Another international showpiece!"
-Carlitos Siguion-Reyna
Film Director

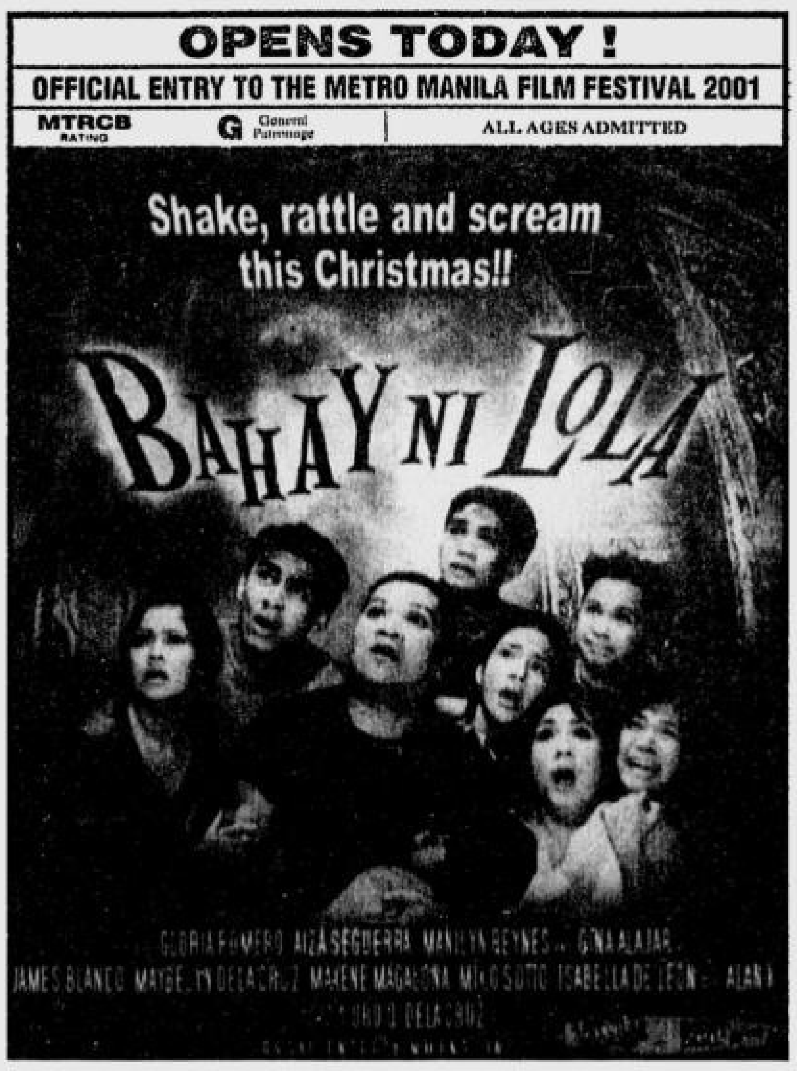
TOP-CALIBER!
Assunta has depth and fiery emotions; Alessandra, stunning!"
-Mario Bautista
Film Reviewer, Manila Bulletin

A MUST-SEE!
"Powerful Performances!"
-Gil Portes
Film Director

WARNING: Strictly for Adults Only
R18 APPROVED WITHOUT CUTS!!!

jay manalo
wendell ramos
alessandra de rossi
assunta de rossi

DIRECTED BY
JOEL C. LAMANGAN
GOOD HARVEST PRODUCTIONS



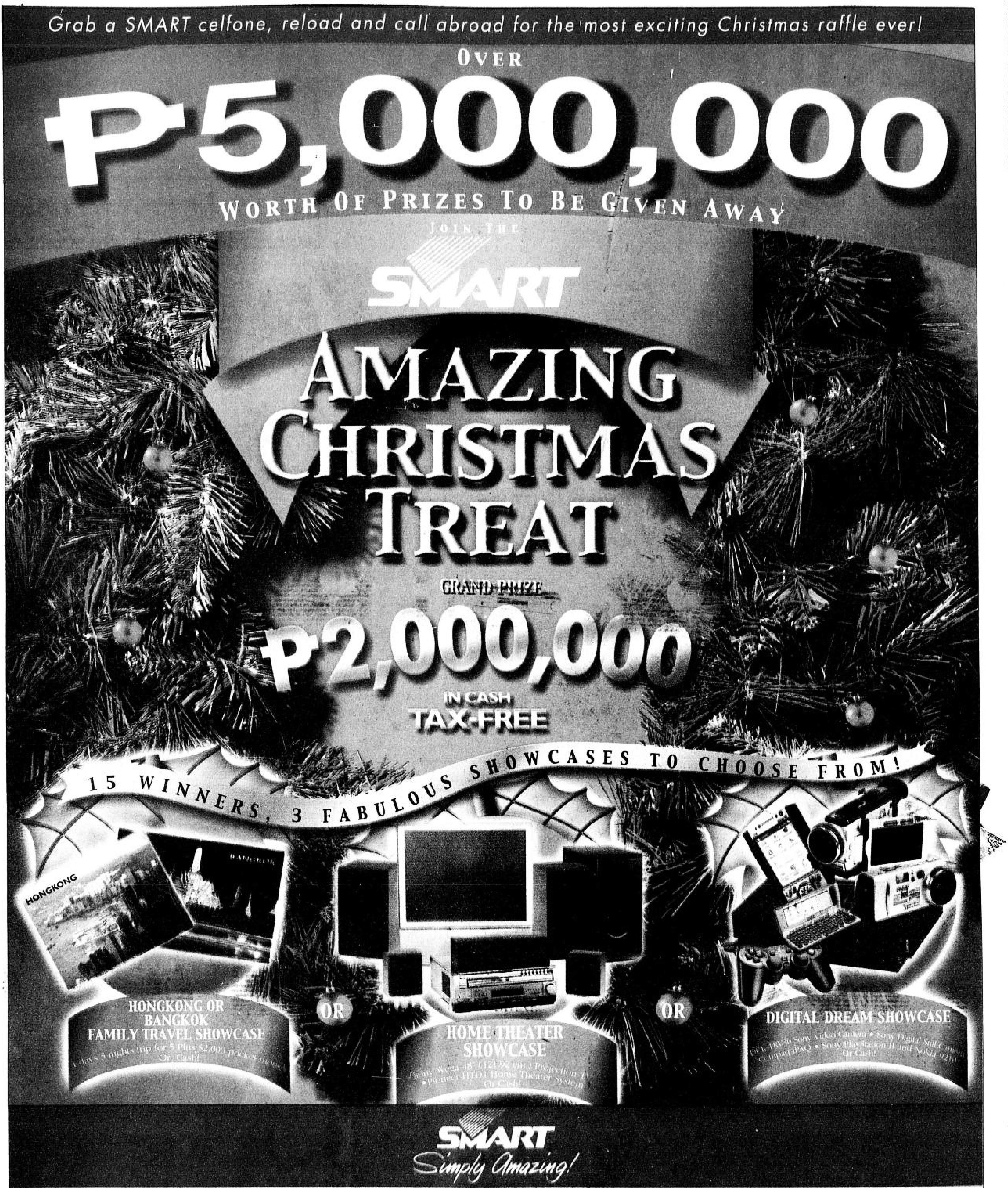
OPENS TODAY !

OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2001

MTRCB RATING G General Patronage | ALL AGES ADMITTED

Shake, rattle and scream this Christmas!!

BAHAY NI LOLA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OVER
₱5,000,000
WORTH OF PRIZES TO BE GIVEN AWAY
JOIN THE
SMART
AMAZING CHRISTMAS TREAT
GRAND PRIZE
₱2,000,000
IN CASH
TAX-FREE
15 WINNERS, 3 FABULOUS SHOWCASES TO CHOOSE FROM!
HONGKONG
BANGKOK
HONGKONG OR BANGKOK FAMILY TRAVEL SHOWCASE
4 days 3 nights trip for 5 Plus $2,000 pocket money Or Cash!
OR
HOME THEATER SHOWCASE
(Sony Wega 48" (121.92 cm.) Projection TV • Pioneer HTD1 Home Theater System Or Cash!
OR
DIGITAL DREAM SHOWCASE
DCR-TRV30 Sony Video Camera • Sony Digital Still Camera Compaq iPAQ • Sony PlayStation II and Nokia 9210 Or Cash!
SMART
Simply Amazing!

Promo Mechanics for SMART Buddy Subscribers:

1. All active SMART Buddy (pre-paid) subscribers in good standing are eligible to participate.
2. To join, SMART Buddy subscribers must register via text. To register, key in CHRISTMAS <name>/<address>/<region> and send to 211.
   Region codes: Luzon-LZ, Visayas-VS, Mindanao-MN, Metro Manila-MM
   Subscribers will be charged ₱2.50 per message sent.
3. The cellular phone number of SMART Buddy subscribers will serve as their raffle entry. There can only be one registered name per cellular phone number. Once a subscriber joins, no one else will be allowed to register using the same cellular phone number unless he quits the promo. In the event that the winning cellular phone number was registered under two users within the same month of the promo duration, the current registered name will be recognized. However, one person can register several cellular phone numbers at one time.
4. All registered participants can earn raffle entries in three easy ways:

•Via Smart Buddy Reloads

• Every reload entitles the subscriber to earn raffle entries. The number of raffle entries earned is determined by the cumulative value of reloads at the end of each month as illustrated below:

CUMULATIVE PREPAID VALUE PER SUBSCRIBER (PER MONTH)	RAFFLE ENTRY(IES)
₱300	1
₱500	5
₱800	12
₱1,000	20
every ₱300 beyond the 1st ₱1,000	5

*Note: Pre-paid reloading via Call & Text Card, SMART Money and SMART Mobile Banking is entitled to raffle entries. Raffle entries earned through reloads will be credited after the end of each month (e.g. all entries earned for November will be reflected in a subscriber's raffle entry balance by December 1 only).

•Via Activation

•Each new SMART Buddy SIM card activation during the promo period entitles the subscriber to one (1) entry. The raffle entry earned will be credited at the end of the month.

•All activations for the duration of the promo period will be awarded raffle entries for as long as the subscriber has duly registered for the promo.

•Via SMART IDD

•Every IDD call that reaches a minimum of three (3) minutes in duration is entitled to 3 entries.

5. To view the number of raffle entries earned, key in CHRISTMAS and send to 211.
   Rate per CHRISTMAS RAFFLE INQUIRY is ₱2.50.
6. All entries earned for a particular month will be included in the monthly draw for the same period only. However, all entries not drawn are still qualified for the grand draw on January 11, 2002.
7. The participant can also opt to quit from the promo. To quit, key in CHRISTMAS QUIT and send it to 211. To register the number under a different name, the participant should repeat the registration steps. All valid entries made prior to quitting will still be included in the monthly and grand draw under the registered name.
   Rate for CHRISTMAS QUIT is ₱2.50

Promo Mechanics for SMART GOLD Subscribers:

1. Eligible individual or corporate SMART Gold (post-paid) subscribers can participate in the 2nd preliminary draw and grand draw following their billing cycles.
2. SMART Gold individual, corporate and government subscribers need not register, as they will be automatically included in the promo.
3. If a subscription is under a corporate or government account, in case it is drawn, the prize will be given to the corporate or government account.
4. The cellular phone number will serve as the raffle entry.
5. All registered participants can earn raffle entries in three easy ways:

•Via Monthly Service Fee

• A SMART Gold subscriber exceeding a prescribed minimum monthly billing requirement earns him/her raffle entries.
• For every ₱250 in excess of the minimum billing requirement of each plan, a Gold subscriber earns additional 5 raffle entries.

GOLD PLAN (current)	GOLD PLAN (old)	MINIMUM MONTHLY BILLING	RAFFLE ENTRY
300 (Corporate)	40	₱1,000	20
600	80	₱1,500	30
1,200	120 & 160	₱2,500	50
1,800	200 & 500	₱3,000	60
3,000	750	₱4,500	90
4,000	1,000	₱6,000	120

• For example, a Gold subscriber under Plan 600 has a billing of ₱2,500 he/she will earn a total of 50 raffle entries.

Plan	Minimum Monthly Billing Req.	Raffle Entry
Plan 600	₱1,500	30+20 = 50 raffle entries

Excess of ₱1,000 / 250 x 5 = 20

•Via Activation

•Each SMART Gold activation entitles the subscriber to one (1) entry.

•Via SMART IDD

• Every IDD call that reaches a minimum of three (3) minutes in duration is entitled to 3 raffle entries.

6. To view the number of raffle entries that you have earned, key in CHRISTMAS and send to 211. For SMART Gold, balances will be updated at the end of the billing cycle.
   Rate per CHRISTMAS RAFFLE INQUIRY is ₱2.50.

GENERAL Promo Mechanics for SMART Buddy and SMART Gold Subscribers:

1. The draw dates and prizes are as follows:

DRAW DATE	PERIOD COVERED	PRIZES
Dec. 5, 2001 (For SMART Buddy Only)	Nov. 1 -30, 2001 (For SMART Buddy Only)	• Five (5) winners who can choose from three (3) showcases • Winners will be distributed geographically as follows: 1 winner each from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao; and 2 winners from Metro Manila
Jan. 10, 2002 (For SMART Buddy and SMART Gold)	Dec. 1-31, 2001 (For SMART Buddy and SMART Gold)	• Ten (10) winners who can choose from three (3) showcases • Winners will be distributed geographically as follows: 2 winners each from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao; and 4 winners from Metro Manila
GRAND DRAW: Jan. 11, 2002	Nov. 1, 2001 – December 31, 2001	One (1) GRAND PRIZE WINNER OF P2,000,000 IN CASH – TAX-FREE

Showcase 1:	Travel/Shopping for 5 persons in Bangkok or Hong Kong plus US$2,000 pocket money. This package includes 4 days and 3 nights accommodation plus round-trip airfare.
Showcase 2:	Digital Dream Showcase (Nokia 9210, DCR-TRV30 Sony Video Camera, Sony Digital Still Camera, Compaq IPAQ and Sony Play Station II)
Showcase 3;	Home Theater Showcase Sony Wega 48" (121.92cm) Projection TV and Pioneer HTD1 Home Theater System which includes 5-disc DVD/CD changer, satellite speakers, center speaker and an active subwoofer)

2. All the prizes are TAX-FREE. If a showcase winner wants to convert his/her prize to cash, they will be given ₱175,000.00.
3. A winner may only win once every raffle draw.
4. The promo is from November 21 to December 31, 2001. All activations, reloads and IDD calls made since Nov. 1, 2001 are included in the promo.
5. Winners shall be notified thru the following means:
   a. Text Message.
   b. Registered Mail
6. Winners within Metro Manila may claim their prizes at the SMART Tower, 6799 Ayala Ave., Makati City. Provincial winners can claim their prizes at the nearest SMART office indicated in the register mail.
7. Winners must present their active SMART GSM celfone and SIM card, valid I.D. with photo and registered mail when claiming their prizes.
8. All employees of SMART Communications, Inc., Pilipino Telephone Corporation, and their advertising agencies and relatives up to the 2nd degree of affinity or consanguinity are automatically disqualified from the promo.
9. The raffle will be held at the 27/F, SMART Tower, 6799 Ayala Ave., Makati City. Draws will be held at 12NN on December 5, January 10 and January 11.
10. Prizes should be claimed within 60 days from notification of winners.

*Actual prizes may vary from the ones shown.

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 1939. Series of 2001.

BUSINESS

RAUL O. MARCELO, Editor ■ CORRIE S. NARISMA, Assistant Editor

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BOI to focus on services, farm projects

BY GIL C. CABACUNGAN JR.

THE MANUFACTURING sector is likely to take a backseat to services and agriculture next year as the Board of Investments gives higher priority to investment projects that have potential to create more jobs.

Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II said that while the government was not giving up on investments in manufacturing, it would actively look out for more opportunities in the "green field" of services and possibly agriculture areas. "Manufacturing is important but we're also conscious of job generation and of services that provide more jobs per dollar of investment," Roxas said.

"Our policy initiative is to promote and develop a skills-intensive service sector. This means that the investments we will be looking for are those that require small capital expenditure but with big potential to create more new jobs," Roxas said.

This means that for the BOI, a P100-million project that creates thousands of jobs is preferable than a P1-billion project that creates only 300 jobs.

"A big project in manufacturing involves automated operations that could mean fewer jobs for Filipinos. Manufacturing has evolved where there is so much efficiency in the production line," Roxas said.

Among the services sectors, Roxas said the BOI favors the information and communication technology areas because they provide high-quality jobs (e.g. call centers) and they open up opportunities for further growth in the IT sector.

Roxas is optimistic that the Filipino workers' strengths (good English, creative mind and productive skills) should offset the disadvantages such as the high cost of wages and restive labor unions.

Aside from services, Roxas said the agriculture sector also has a big potential for generating more jobs especially to Filipinos in the countryside.

Federation of Philippine Industries chair Raul T. Concepcion said that with most industries suffering from a huge, underutilized capacity, most manufacturing firms were looking at shifting to agriculture for revenue growth.

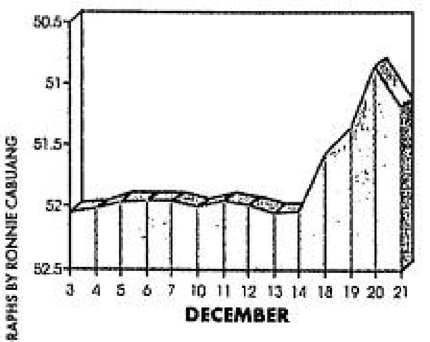
"Most manufacturing-based firms are looking outside their areas for growth because of the uncertainty of a global economic rebound. They now prefer agriculture because of its vast potential for growth and the benefits it would give to a wider spectrum of the economy which in turn would spur domestic demand," Concepcion said. He said big business groups like his family's, the Ayalas and Aboitizes have major plans for agriculture for next year.

The shift in the government's focus from manufacturing to services and agriculture is meant to address the chronic unemployment problem in the country and the population growth rate that the country may not be able to support if left unchecked in the medium term. It is also meant to ease the plight of the poor particularly those in rural areas.

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO - DOLLAR



Peso-Dollar Rate

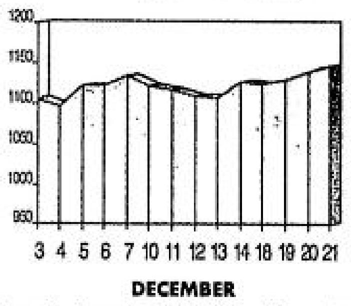
P 51.18 = $1
As of 5 p.m.,
Dec. 21, 2001

¥ 129.38 = $1
As of 5 p.m.,
Dec. 21, 2001

GOLD:$277.20/277.70
per ounce Hong Kong,
Dec. 21, 2001

STOCK MARKET

PSE Composite Index



(See stock market report on Page B2)

BOP deficit seen at $1.3B

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas is looking at a better-than-expected balance-of-payments position this year in view of a better export performance in previous months.

The BSP said the BOP deficit might reach only $1.3 billion, much lower than the worst-case projection of between $1.9 billion and $2.4 billion.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the actual drop in export earnings might not be as severe as projected. The government earlier projected a 15-percent drop in export receipts this year.

"Maybe, it (the reduction) will hit only 14 percent. Because of this, we are expecting a lower BOP deficit," said Buenaventura.

The BOP deficit stood at $1.308 billion as of September. "The level by the end of this year should not be too far from that," said the central bank chief.

He said the BSP's $550-million four-year bond issue, the yen bond float worth $406 million and the $125-million dollar treasury bill issuance of the national government should help keep the country's external accounts in a better position this year.

Petron to sign supply deals

PETRON Corp. will sign early next year supply deals with key energy-based firms in the region as part of efforts to boost its exports.

Petron president Motassim Al-Ma'ashouq said in an interview last week the move was the firm's reaction to the expected decline of local oil demand.

Ma'ashouq noted that the full commercial operation next year of the Malampaya gas-to-power project would push down demand for fuel oil, which is used for power generation.

Aside from this, he said the government's ongoing campaign to promote new and renewable energy sources like geothermal, hydro and wind power would affect Petron's sales.

"We have been planning for this scenario. We try to diversify our fuel oil sales from the local to the export markets," he said.

Aside from fuel oil, Petron is also exporting naphtha and mixed xylene which are mainly used for industrial purposes.

The firm's overseas customers include companies in China and Vietnam.

Ma'ashouq also said Petron has already identified markets within the region that show healthy demand growth.

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BCDA to issue ₱2B worth of 5-year bonds in May

BY DORIS C. DUMLAO

THE STATE-OWNED Bases Conversion and Development Authority will issue P2 billion worth of five-year bonds in May next year to raise additional funds for priority infrastructure projects and to retire loans earlier secured to jumpstart those projects.

The Development Bank of the Philippines will be the lead underwriter of BCDA's five-year bond float. The issue will mark BCDA's first venture into the capital market to raise long-term funding.

The bond float prospectus, that were distributed to banks that may be interested to join the underwriting syndicate in November, indicated that the list of participating underwriters would be firmed up by January.

DBP, for its part, has made a firm underwriting commitment of up to P1 billion of the total BCDA bonds.

The BCDA bonds offer a fixed premium of 2 percent over the government's five-year fixed rate treasury notes (FXTNs).

BCDA hopes to get the approval of the underwriting agreements by April, after which the agency will seek the final go-ahead by the National Economic Development Authority.

"Proceeds of the bond issuance will be used for BCDA's priority projects which contribute to economic development, job creation and other related benefits," the prospectus said.

Among its priority projects are the ongoing P20.55-billion Subic-Clark-Tarlac expressway which was started in 1999, the continued development of special economic zones and conversion of other former military camps, and the proposed P7.2-billion Philippine IT (information technology) park at the Fort Bonifacio Global City.

BCDA also intends to use half of the proceeds of the bond float to retire P1 billion in bridge loan earlier tapped to finance the initial phases of those infrastructure projects.

The prospectus said the mortgage trust indenture that would secure the BCDA loans would cover an asset pool with a 60-percent loan value of at least P2.5 billion.

The BCDA is confident that investors will be attracted to its bond float because the agency is financially sufficient and is not dependent on direct government assistance.

Also, the prospectus noted that BCDA has sustained profitable operations in the past three years. It said that the bulk of its projected cash flows would come from recurring sources such as lease income and revenues from joint ventures. "BCDA's projected cash flows indicate that it can service the quarterly coupon payment on the BCDA bonds and redeem them in full at maturity," it said.

The BCDA bonds are exempt securities and not subject to the registration requirements of the Securities Regulation Code. The bonds may be classified by banks and other financial intermediaries in their books as investments in bonds and other debt instruments.

The global financial advisers for the issuance are Corporate Access Holdings Inc. and ATR-Kim Eng Capital Partners Inc.

BCDA is an agency created to convert and develop former military bases into commercial/industrial hubs. BCDA's assets amounted to about P78.7 billion as of end-2000.

BSP plans to cut banks' reserve requirement to 16%

BY CLARISSA S. BATINO

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas is preparing to bring back the reserve requirement on banks to 16 percent (of total deposits) in the coming year to help spur economic growth.

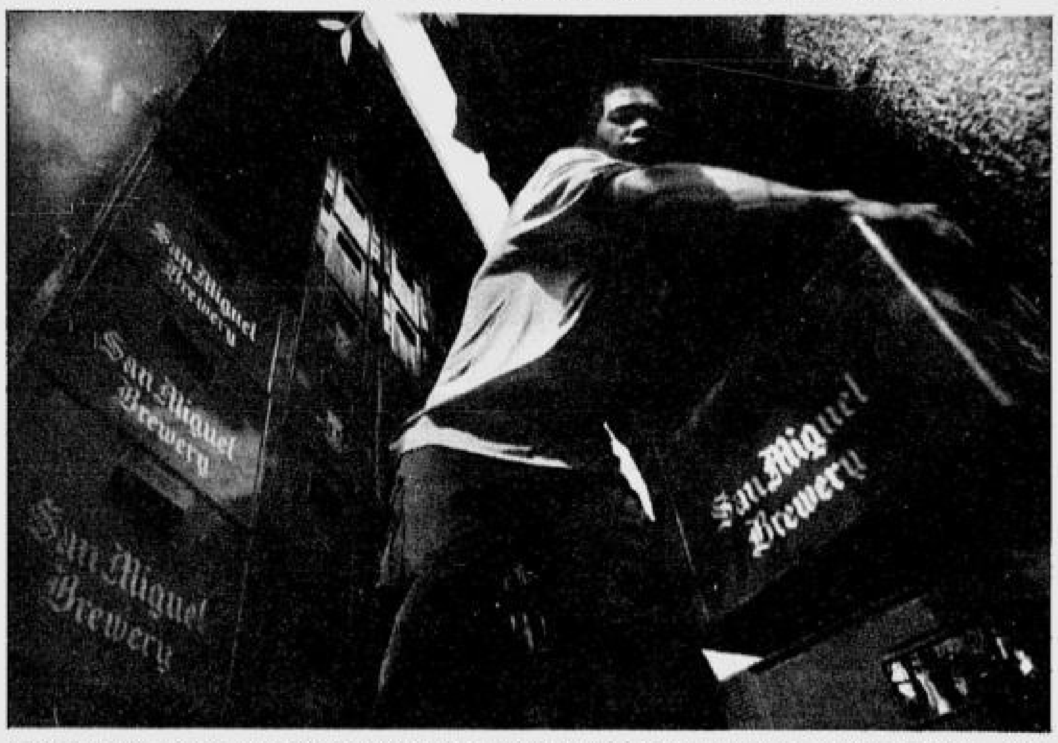
BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the central bank was monitoring whether there was a need to ease the banks' reserve requirement anew by another two percentage points and bring the requirement back to the level before the policy was made restrictive in late July.

"There is a good chance we can bring the reserves back to 16 percent next year provided the inflation rate will remain low, the peso will be stable and that business activity will further improve," said the central bank chief.

The central bank cut the reserve requirement by two percentage points to 18 percent early this month, effectively pumping back into the system P26 billion in funds.

Another two-percentage-point cut in the banks reserve requirement will free up the same amount.

A cut in the reserves, like the easing of BSP policy rates, will plow back into the system funds that are sometimes used to speculate against the peso.



A WORKER stacks cases of San Miguel beer bottles into a delivery truck in suburban Manila. Kirin Brewery Co., Japan's No. 2 beer maker, said it would acquire about 15 percent of San Miguel Corp., the country's largest food and beverage conglomerate, for about $540 million. The government, which is claiming a 47-percent stake in San Miguel, said it would review the Kirin deal and decide later whether it would approve it.

AP

Chartered flights operators asked to move out of Naia before 2010

BY ABIGAIL L. HO

THE MANILA International Airport Authority (MIAA) has given chartered flights operators up to 2010 to transfer their operations from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia).

MIAA general manager Edgardo Manda said in a phone interview that the chartered flights and tours or general aviation flights accounted for 40 percent of the traffic in Naia.

Transferring these elsewhere, he said, would allow more scheduled flights to operate at the airport.

"There was a move for them to be transferred to Lipa or to Sangley, but the problem is the acceptability of the idea (to the players). We're still trying to more carefully think of general aviation and its role in the industry," he said.

Manda said he had already created a General Aviation Task Force in September to aid the MIAA as well as the industry players in properly weighing the contribution of the general aviation sector to the airline industry.

"We already had a series of meetings where we agreed that they should be out of the Naia by 2010. We're also studying alternative locations (where they would transfer their operations) nearer to the Naia than (Lipa or Sangley)," he said.

The original plan was to have the general aviation service providers transferred to another venue of operations by next year.

Manda said this was deemed "unrealistic" and was met with "violent reactions" from the industry players, which was why he pushed for the creation of the General Aviation Task Force.

The new 2010 deadline was better, he said, as this would give the general aviation industry players enough time to find a suitable place for them to transfer to, as well as construct their hangars, other infrastructure requirements and facilities.

These chartered flights and tour providers are currently operating in the North and South General Aviation areas near the old domestic airport.

Come 2003, the domestic airport would be closed and all domestic flights would be transferred to the Naia Centennial Terminal 2 currently occupied by pioneer flag carrier Philippine Airlines.

All international flights would then be transferred to the Naia Terminal 3 set to be operational by Dec. 15 next year.

COCO LEVY FUNDS' EARNINGS

Gov't expected to raise UCPB capital

BY ELENA R. TORRIJOS

THE GOVERNMENT is considering using the dividends on the coconut levy funds to infuse fresh capital into United Coconut Planters Bank but may still allow San Miguel Corp. chair Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr.'s men to continue running the bank.

In an interview, presidential spokesperson Rigoberto Tiglao said that the government was still "evaluating" whether to replace or retain UCPB chair and chief executive Jeronimo Kilayko and UCPB president and chief executive officer Lorenzo Tan although it would definitely replace the UCPB directors appointed during the Estrada administration.

Although appointed by the Presidential Commission on Good Government early in the Estrada administration, Kilayko and Tan were reportedly handpicked by Cojuangco to lead the bank.

Tiglao said the government was planning to use about P700 million in dividends on the coconut levy funds invested in SMC to increase the capital base of UCPB, which has dropped by 40 percent to P6.9 billion as of end-September from P11.75 billion a year ago.

"Part of it (coconut levy fund) will be used to strengthen the bank," Tiglao said.

As a result of large loan loss provisions and losses, UCPB's capital base has fallen below the required minimum capital adequacy ratio of 10 percent. UCPB, which administers the Coconut Industry Investment Fund that holds a 27-percent stake in SMC, plays an integral role in determining control of SMC.

A source said that Cojuangco was ready to pull out the SMC group's support to UCPB if the government would insist on installing a new management team on top of appointing a new set of board directors. The SMC group has about P10 billion in deposit in the 95- percent-sequestered bank.

A ranking Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas official earlier said it was confident that Cojuangco would provide financial support to the troubled UCPB.

A senior UCPB executive earlier told the INQUIRER that the bank was firming up plans to increase its capital by P3 billion to P6 billion through a combination of fresh capital or tier 2 capital.

However, the executive noted that the capital increase, which will be done in tranches, could not push through with the plan unless the issue on who owns the bank was resolved. Any move to raise capital would need stockholders' approval, but no stockholders' meeting has been held since it was sequestered because on the ownership dispute.

The Sandiganbayan ruled earlier this year that shareholders of the sequestered stake in UCPB could vote their shares, but the Supreme Court stopped the implementation of the ruling. Early this month, the high court released its decision upholding the government's right to vote the sequestered shares in UCPB.

President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered government lawyers Tuesday to find ways to recover some P700 million in dividends on the sequestered 27-percent stake of CIIF in SMC.

Counterfeiting worries foreign investors

THE MULTI-BILLION-PESO product and brand counterfeiting "industry" in the Philippines is starting to worry the international investing community due to the damage that the illegal trade has been inflicting not only to potential revenues but also to product and corporate reputation.

This was disclosed by lawyer Gilbert Reyes of the Poblador, Bautista and Reyes Law Offices, who said that the losses that the country might be incurring in terms of withheld investments due to fear of product and brand counterfeiting might have already reached alarming levels.

"The illegal trade is also damaging the employment generation thrust of the government because withheld investments also meant foregone job opportunities for the local work force," Reyes said.

He pointed out that "product and brand counterfeiting in the Philippines has moved up from being a mere backyard industry to an organized cross-border operations."

Local counterfeiters import goods from countries that manufacture them cheap and then stamp these products with counterfeit labels of internationally famous brands, he explained. The cross-border nature of the operations of local counterfeiters takes away the argument that they are helping the local economy since their products are made elsewhere, he added.

He cited the experience of US-based Caterpillar Inc. which has lost an estimated $ 20 million to local counterfeiters over the past five years.

Counterfeit Caterpillar products are sold in local malls and outlets for almost the same price as the original Caterpillar products, which in the Philippines can only be bought in duty-free shops at present.

Reyes said the pricing scheme of counterfeit products such as the fake Caterpillars "is also an assault against local consumers since they are made to believe that they are buying the authentic product because of the expensive tags."

This is unlike the lucrative market for counterfeits in other countries where people buy what they know are merely imitations of popular brands of watches, luggage and computers and which they purchase for much lower prices.

There is definitely a successful effort to cheat local consumers here, Reyes said.

Among the counterfeited Caterpillar products are high-end shoes, shirts, belts, wallets and other personal items.

Reyes said several US and Europe-based firms have previously planned to put up regional manufacturing bases in the Philippines. These could have translated into jobs, revenues and a boost to the country's image as a manufacturing hub for these firms, he pointed out.

Caterpillar Inc. and the other companies, however, have expressed reservations over the said plans in view of the "stiff competition from local businessmen selling counterfeits," Reyes said.

He explained, however, that "there are sufficient laws in the country to safeguard the intellectual property rights of companies both local and international." They only need to be enforced strictly and with the all-out support of law enforcement agencies, he added.

Philippine Stock Exchange

(As of Friday, December 21, 2001)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Bank of the Phil. Islands	58	58.5	57.5	58	607,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	24.25	25.5	24.25	25	1,623,900
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	189	189	185	187	16,280
Philppine National Bank	62	67	62	67	107,500
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	20	20	20	20	2,000
Security Bank Corp.	16.25	16.5	15.75	16	27,500
Union Bank of the Phil.	15.5	16.25	15.25	16	209,000
FINANCIAL SERVICE					
Bankard Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	10,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	220	240	220	240	110
Manulife Financial Corp.	1310	1315	1310	1315	890
Sun Life Financial Serv.	1070	1070	1060	1060	21,440
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	24.25	24.25	24	24	4,200
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	660,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	600	605	600	605	13,300
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	412.5	422.5	412.5	420	68,650
Philweb.Com Inc.	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.018	26,400,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	23	23.25	23	23	77,100
Manila Electric Co. B	31	31.5	31	31.5	1,135,100
Petron Corp.	1.5	1.52	1.48	1.52	2,933,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	2	2.06	2	2.06	3,933,000
Negros Navigation Co. Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	100,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Republic Cement Corp.	0.65	0.75	0.65	0.75	950,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	28,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	11.75	11.75	11.75	11.75	3,600
La Tondeña Distillers Inc.	23	23.25	23	23.25	14,000
RFM Corp.	2.24	2.4	2.22	2.4	7,815,000
San Miguel Corp. A	42.5	43	42	42.5	1,459,200
San Miguel Corp. B	52.5	53	52	52.5	481,400
Vitarich Corp.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	40,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.71	0.73	0.7	0.7	290,000
Ayala Corp.	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.65	3,756,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.52	180,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.7	0.76	0.7	0.76	1,060,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	20,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	10,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.62	0.64	0.61	0.64	4,500,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	700,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	100,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	400,000
Ebecom Holdings Inc.	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	1,100,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	7,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	26.5	26.5	26	26.5	252,200
Global Equities Inc.	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	200,000
Gucco Holdings (Phils.)	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	10,000
Ionics Inc.	6.9	6.9	6.9	6.9	113,000
Megaworld Corp.	0.7	0.72	0.7	0.71	10,060,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	120,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.31	0.32	0.31	0.32	2,610,000
Music Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.33	0.34	5,850,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.34	0.34	220,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.81	0.81	0.8	0.8	350,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	4.5	4.7	4.2	4.7	120,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.33	0.33	40,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	150,000
Zeus Holdings Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	80,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Federal Chemicals Inc.	7.4	7.4	7	7.1	214,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.5	161,900
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICE					
Belle Corp.	0.47	0.57	0.47	0.53	4,870,000
Grand Plaza Hotel Corp.	17	17	17	17	1,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	100,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	23	23.75	23	23.5	2,630,700
Equitable PCI Bank-War	1.72	1.92	1.72	1.9	927,000
RFM Corp.-Pref.	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	1,000
Philweb.Com Inc.-Warrants	0.005	0.0055	0.0048	0.005	94,000,000
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	9	9	9	9	51,000
Far Eastern University	400	400	400	400	40
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.65	7,145,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.21	0.22	0.21	0.22	1,530,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	260,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	230,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.82	1.82	1.8	1.82	801,000
SM Development Corp.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	100,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.3	6.3	6.2	6.2	12,154,000
Urbancorp Realty Dev. Inc.	0.195	0.195	0.195	0.195	20,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.38	0.39	0.38	0.39	90,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	0.55	0.6	0.55	0.6	70,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't.	2.7	3	2.7	3	51,000
Omico Corp.	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	5,000,000
Polar Mines & Dev't Corp.	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	3,000,000
OIL					
Interport Res. B	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	1,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	21,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	5,000,000
Pacifica	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	1,000,000

	SHARES	VALUE (P)
Banks & Fin Svc	2,625,620	113,312,900.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	201,350,590	305,658,210.00
PRO	22,260,000	111,770,250.00
Mining	8,211,000	279,500.00
OIL	28,000,000	173,400.00
GRAND TOTALS:	262,447,210	531,194,260.00

	AVERAGES	
Banks & Fin Svc	492.92	UP 6.79
Comm'l & Ind'l	1,555.29	UP 8.16
PRO	491.70	DOWN 3.97
Mining	1,027.21	UNCH 0.00
OIL	1.97	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	669.23	DOWN 7.01
Composite	1,145.97	UP 6.10

NO. OF ADVANCES: 30; NO. OF DECLINES: 22; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 31; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 83; NO. OF TRADES: 2,232

CURRENCIES

Dec. 21, 2001

Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Foreign currency in US$	Foreign currency in Peso
United States	Dollar	1.110001	1.000000	51.2350
Japan	Yen	0.008639	0.007783	0.3988
United Kingdom	Pound	1.609391	1.449900	74.2856
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.142491	0.128370	6.5770
Switzerland	Franc	0.681150	0.613648	31.4403
Canada	Dollar	0.703156	0.633473	32.4560
Singapore	Dollar	0.604477	0.544573	27.9012
Australia	Dollar	0.560041	0.504541	25.8502
Bahrain	Dinar	2.944457	2.652661	135.9091
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.296001	0.266667	13.6627
Brunei	Dollar	0.604575	0.544662	27.9058
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000110	0.000099	0.0051
Thailand	Baht	0.025325	0.022815	1.1689
UAE	Dirham	0.302288	0.272331	13.9529
Korea	Won	0.000860	0.000775	0.0397
Euro	Euro	1.000000	0.900900	46.1576
Germany	Mark	0.511292	0.460623	23.6000
France	Franc	0.152450	0.137341	7.0367
Netherlands	Guilder	0.453781	0.408811	20.9454
Austria	Schilling	0.072673	0.065471	3.3544
Belgium	Franc	0.024790	0.022333	1.1442
Italy	Lire	0.000516	0.000465	0.0238
Finland	Markka	0.168188	0.151521	7.7632
Portugal	Escudo	0.004988	0.004494	0.2303
Spain	Peseta	0.006011	0.005415	0.2774
Luxemburg	Franc	0.024790	0.022333	1.1442
Ireland	Punt	1.269738	1.143907	58.6061

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RTW 4 Tiange Bazar3738821

PERSONAL

NOVENA PRAYER TO ST. JUDE O, Holy St. Jude Apostle and martyr, great in virtue, rich in miracles, near in kinsman of Jesus Christ, faithful intercessor of all who invoke your special patronage in time of need. To you I have recourse from the depth of my heart and humbly beg to whom God has given such great power to come to my assistance. Help me in my present, urgent petition (make your request). In return, I promise to make your name known and cause you to be invoked. Saint Jude, pray for us and all who invoke your aid. Pray this nine times a day for nine consecutive days. On the eight day your prayers will be answered, for this prayer has never known to fail. Please don't forget to publish this once your wish is granted.-R.V.Z.

MERRY CHRISTMAS DEMSIGod Bless you and your family. May you have a fruitful New Year. I LOVE YOU!-MIKE

Christmas Blowout

To the staff and management of Burger King

A blessed Merry Christmas and a Prosperous 2002 to all!

DLL

Roxrio "RR"
May all your Christmas dreams come true in bright and beautiful ways.
Daddy & Mommy

Pepot,
We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?
Merry Christmas!
Superman

I've had very hurting moments in my life and I thought I couldn't endure the pain. I drew strength from You and just had a kneeling soul. You enveloped me with your loving arms and helped me stand albeit all the aches and endless tears.
I know that the pain had helped me grow.
Thank You for being at work in my life.
I will forever cling on to Your promises. I thank You for blessing me with a wonderful family and true friends. You are the real meaning of Christmas. I love you.
Always,
MASOY

Mahar, Mara & Kano
May all your Christmas dreams come true in bright and beautiful ways.
Daddy & Mommy

Louven,
Daniel,
Lysha
HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A MERRY NEW YEAR
Braulio & Powder

To: Inay & Itay,
Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year!
From:
Lyn, Lanz & Rading

To the Greatest Daughter in the World, *Darla Faye*
We are so proud of you, keep it up! Just remember we are always here to guide you.
Merry Christmas
We love you!
Papa & Mama

TO KUYA MANNY
AND
ATE AGIE LAXA
MERRY
CHRISTMAS
CHITO SAN MATEO

To: Nanay Tess and Tita Zen,
Merry Christmas We Love You
from your grandchildren,
Drex, Kevin and Samantha

To: **Lolo Aldi & Lola Cholly,**
MERRY CHRISTMAS & A HAPPY NEW YEAR PO!
We love you,
Lanz & Isabela

Maligayang Pasko at Manigong Bagong Taon sa Aking Kapamilya!
Laging Nagmamahal,
Jimmy

Leah & JM, John Leo & Jeck Jeck, Vincent & Tantan, Camille and Brin
Kapag mabait, masunurin at mapagmahal ang isang bata ito ay nagpapahiwatig ng pagpapahalaga sa kanyang magulang. Kung ang mga ito ay inyong ginagawa, ramdam namin ang pasko araw-araw. Kaya Hiling namin sa Diyos na kayo ay gabayan sa inyong paglaki. Pangako, patuloy namin kayong mamahalin.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
LOVE,
Mommy Oli and Tatay Leo **Daddy Boy & Mommy Eves**
Papa Leyland & Mommy Weng **Daddy Melo & Mommy Col**
Tatay Randy & Nanay Lala

Dear **Ellen,**
Thanks for being there.
SEASONS GREETING!
Love,
Jhe

To the Most Wonderful Wife and Mom, *Maris*
We can't imagine life without you, you are our everything!
Merry Christmas!
We love you!
Darwin & Darla Faye

TO ALL MEMBER AND FRIENDS,
THE PHILIPPINES ELDERLY FOR REAL ADVANCEMENT (PERA)
GREETS ALL OF YOU HAPPY HOLIDAYS!
EDGAR L. KILATES
CHAIR, PERA

Richard,
May peace, love, happiness and prosperity be with you this Christmas and all throughout the years to come...
Have A Blessed Christmas and A Happy New Year!
Lala

Mama,
Merry X-Mas & Happy New Year
You are the best "Mom"
We love you so much...
Jean, Joel, Jett and Jake

Mama Catalina,
Sa loob ng mahabang panahon, minsan lang namin nasabi ito. Ngayong Pasko taos puso po uli kaming nagpapasalamat sa lahat ng ginawa at patuloy na ginagawa ninyo para po sa amin.
Mahal na mahal namin kayo.
Maligayang Pasko Ma!
David, Ideng, Lileng, Indeng, Ite at Nonie

Dear Stephen, Sean and Renzo,
We thank God for giving you to us. You are the best gift we ever had. Merry Christmas!
Papa & Mama

Dearest Tatay,
Maraming salamat sa lahat.
Rene, Gigi, Nineng Bibe

Dear Tatay & Nanay,
Having us is a blessing from God.
Having you is the best gift from God. We love you.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
Love,
Jojo, Eng & Rey

Dear Cora, Jason, Jovin & Jamie Ann
The greatest blessing I have ever received from the Lord! Merry Christmas and a brighter New Year ahead.
Bong Rabaya

To Papa & Mama,
Ramin & Annie's Family
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year We love you all!
Jun, Sally, Elyssa & Kyle

Mommy Oli & Tatay Leo, Nanay Mely & Tatay Efren
Ibinuhos nyo ang inyong panahon para sa amin. Sana ay dagdagan nyo pa. Samahan nyo ng Cash (joke lang).
God Bless you.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
We love you.
From Randy and Lala

Dearest Tatay & Mama,
I'm sure our Christmas down here is nothing compared to your Christmas celebration up there in heaven. Just the same I still wish you were here.
I miss you.
Merry Christmas
Mylene

Jean,
Maligayang Pasko sa Iyo Aking Mahal!
Laging Nagmamahal,
Jimmy

Sumbeling-Concepcion-Canta-Lua Family,
Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year!
Karl-Shiela-Ryan

Banhag, Baluyot, Francisco, Paz Family
Happy Holidays
Elmer & Ria

Dear Ama & Ina,
Maligayang Pasko sa aming pinakamamahal na Ama at Ina. You are the best...
We love you,
Jan-jan, Pauline, Irah & Sean

Merry Christmas
Tatay, Nanay, Ate & Brian
Love,
Che

Tatay Michael,
Merry Christmas and Happey New Year!!!
Love,
Magic

Van
May all your Christmas Dreams come true in bright and beautiful ways.
Prescy

To Christian Pillars Choir
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
Love,
Weng

To Ninang
Nina Hernandez
Merry Christmas
Chito San Mateo

Merry Christmas
Tatay, Nanay, Ate, Butchoy & Leslie, Jayson, Jalyn, & Leigh!
Love,
Janet

To Mommy
Baby and Daddy Manick San Mateo
Merry Christmas
Chito

For Dayong & Kobe,
Wishing both of you a Blessed Christmas
Love,
Dayong

To Malek, Milet, Jean, Lele & Jojo
Happy Holiday!
From Weng

CHRISTMAS BLOWOUT

A BLESSED CHRISTMAS TO:

MOMMY, MANOY BOBOY and CHING,
MANOY NANIE and JO
NENE and BOBBY,
JAYMEE; CHRISTIE; BEA; AANNE;
TICTOE; JEE; BIDOY
KAT and JAM
EAO and HAY

From NONOY

To: Lulu Ramos - Veneracion

Merry, Merry Christmas
Happy, Happy New Year
& Happy 50th Birthday

From:
Your Express-Cubao Family

Merry, Merry Christmas
Happy, Happy New Year!!!

Herb, Day, Ida Mae

From your
Family in the Phils.

To: Mr. Laynard Pantangco & Family,

Wishing you good health, long lives, and prosperity this Christmas and a years to come.

Seasons Greeting!

Fr: Sherry Rose Salonga

For my parents: Atty. & Mrs. Hermie Salonga,

May God reward you for your
untiring love and care for me.
I love you.

Happy Holidays!

Love, Leng

Merry, Merry Christmas
Happy, Happy New Year!!!

Herb, Day, Isa Mae

From your
Family in the Phils.

To: My Brother
Sisters
In-laws

Merry, Merry
Christmas
Happy, Happy
New year!

From:
Ate Odit, Lena

To: My Family
No (my husband)
Liza, Bing & Angie
(my children)
Nana & North
(my grandchildren)

Merry, Merry
Christmas!

From:
Mommy

To Art,

Merry Christmas
& A Blessed
New Year 2002

Love,
Liwayway

To: Arnel, Jane,
Jeanelle & Yma,

Merry Christmas
& A Peaceful
New Year 2002

Love,
Mama Liwayway

To: Mr. & Mrs. Recah Trinidad,

You're someone respected!
Thank you very much...

Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year!

Fr: Sherry Rose Salonga
Practicumer from
Classified Ads Department

Daddy Pinoy & Mommy Miling,

A warm Christmas wish to remind you just how much you're cherished through the year.

From your Apos
Escueta, Ambe, Bellen

Dear "Dadsy" Ed,

This is the first time I'll be celebrating Christmas without you since we got married. It's really gonna be the toughest time in my life. For the past 10 years we happily celebrate it with our kids – Jed and Ena. I never thought that last year was the last Christmas we'be celebrating it together. We miss you very much and I'm really having a hard time coping up with your absence. But as what I promised you, I will be strong as much as I can. Just always stay beside me, let me feel your love and presence so that I won't have a hard time with all of these. We will be together again in God's time as what I pray everyday.

I know you're doing great with God. Take care always. I love you so much.

Send our greetings to Papa Jesus...MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Your loving wife,
"Momsy" Nanette

Shawie,

Love has a wonderful way of keeping us close together...
May the blessings of this holy season bring you peace and joy now and throughout the coming year...

God Bless hon!

with love & prayers,
Joel

To: Atoie,

Merry Christmas
& A Prosperous
New Year!

Love,
Mama Liwayway

Mom & Dad,

Happy Holidays
&
Happy 29th Wedding
Anniversary!!!

We love you,
JS

Ash & Lymo,

Have a
wonderful
Christmas &
A Joyful
New Year!

Love,
Daddy & Tita J.

Dear Julian,

In our hearts...
LOVE
Merry Christmas!

Love,
Mommy Lorna &
Daddy Eugene

Jun & Kids,

Merry Christmas
& A
Prosperous
New Year!!!

Love,
Mommy

CAPITOL MASONIC CORPORATION

NOTICE OF SPECIAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

The CMC will hold a Special Stockholders' Meeting on Friday, January 18, 2002 at 5:00 p.m. at Capitol Masonic Temple Building, Katarungan cor. Kalayaan Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City (behind Shell Service Station), for the purpose: 1) To consider the Declaration of stock dividend; and 2) To amend Article VII of the Articles of Incorporation, increasing its authorized capitalization.

Stockholders unable to personally attend may send their Proxy/ies to the Corporate Secretary, Atty. Benedicto A. Madarang at the Mezzanine Floor, CMC Bldg., 35 Matalino St., Diliman, Quezon City. Tel. No. 433-45-05.

Navarro-Base-Trinidad-
Abalos Family

Wishing all a Merry
X'Mas and a Happy
New Year

Noli, Zaire,
Zsa^2s and Nik^2s

Rago-Paloonan-
Lacorte-Estrella
Family

Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year!

Gilbert, Ethel,
Joshua & Angelica

Our dear Denis,

We have never forgotten a very special friend very close to our hearts. We wish you a very blessed Christmas. We love you.

Agnes,
Nanette
& Mossy

Sweetcakes,

Take Care
Always

Love,
Louie Bacani

Angel,

Merry Christmas
and a Happy New
Year.
I love you.
Ikaw lang talaga.

Rhandy

Dear Lola Isang,

It's nice to have
you back. Merry
Christmas!

Love,
Mylene

Dear Lolo Pacoy & Lola Ida,

Merry Christmas and
a Prosperous New Year!

We love you!

Love: Jed and Ena

OBITUARIES

5TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY

of

FRANCISCO M. GONZALEZ III

Please remember him in
your prayers.

Thank you.

ANNUNCIATION COLLEGE
Balogo, Sorsogon City
(New Site, 1999)
announces the
THIRD DEATH ANNIVERSARY
of

REV. FR. ISIDORO D. DINO. Ph.D., LITT. D., Ed.D.

April 4, 1910 - December 25, 1998
Founder and First President of Annunciation Colleges
(Bacon, Gubat and Balogo, Sorsogon City)
Bicolano Catholic Priest Poet Laureate International
World War II Veteran
Chaplain, Malacañang Guard Battalion, 1950
Outstanding Sorsoganon of the Century, 1994

MASSES WILL BE OFFERED AT:

Our Lady of Annunciation Church, Bacon, Sorsogon .... 10:00 AM
Our Lady of Fatima Church, Sorsogon City .... 9:00 AM
Sorsogon Cathedral, Sorsogon City .... 7:30 AM
Saint Michael Church, Irosin, Sorsogon .... 6:00 AM
Holy Family Church, Kamias, Quezon City .... 6:00 AM
Saint Joseph Church, Project 3, Quezon City .... 6:00 AM

Dr. Flordelinda Dino-Venzon - President of Annunciation Colleges, (Balogo and Gubat); The Adm. Staff, Faculty Members and Students request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

PACITA CHICANO LIBANAN

Peacefully joined her Creator on December 22, 2001.

She is survived by her loving husband **ATTY. CAMILO C. LIBANAN**; children **MARISSA** and **IRENEO, NONOY** and **ELDA, DANIEL** and **LILIMAE**; and grandchildren **LOISEL, SOL ANGELI, STELLA MARIS, MARIAN JUNE, BRAD, MARK** and **IRENEO, JR.**

Her remains lie in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened
and I will give you rest."
Matthew 11:28

COL. JESUS LACHICA VER (Ret.)

PMA Class '44

Peacefully joined his Creator on December 23, 2001
at the age of 82.

His loving wife **Angeling**; children and in-laws **Verna** and **Butch Samson, Jay Ver, Bart** and **Amie Ver, Mike** and **Lolit Ver, Tess** and **Jun Calderon, Baby** and **Ed Ferriols, Leo** and **Susie Ver**; grandchildren and great grandchildren, relatives and friends request pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Chapel C, La Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Necrological Service will be held on Wednesday, December 26, 2001 at 7:30 p.m. at Chapel C, La Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta, Quezon City.

Interment will be on December 27, 2001 at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at La Funeraria Paz.

"Whoever
serves
Me
must
follow
Me,
and
where
I
am,
my
servant
also
will
be."
John 12:16

We who have believed are able, to enter and have God's rest.
Hebrews 4:34

MAJOR PEDRO C. DOROMAL JR.

now peacefully rests in the Grace and goodness of our Lord
December 17, 2001 at the age of 71.

His bereaved wife **VISTACION**; brothers and sisters **REMY, LETTY, DOUGLAS, ENJOY, IKE, DAISY**; sons and daughters **BRONSIE, BERNARD, RAYMUND, GRACE, GABBY, REIGN, ROCK, GERALDINE, GLYN**; daughters-in-law, grandchildren and other relatives and friends request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Baguio Memorial Chapels, Naguilian Road, Baguio City. Funeral Mass will be celebrated on Thursday, December 27, 2001 at 8:00 in the morning at Baguio Cathedral, after which interment will be followed at the Pyramid Memorial Park, Kias, Baguio City.

"Eternal life will swallow up that which can die. God made us for this very reason and He has given us the Spirit as a guarantee that we will live again."
2 Cor. 5:4-5

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

Always caring... **INQUIRER OBITUARIES**

WE ACCEPT CREDIT CARDS
and bank-to-bank payments

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS: ❶ Copy of Death Certificate ❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT • MESSAGE OF THANKS • DEATH ANNIVERSARY • REQUIEMS • FREE OBIT DESIGN

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones the following establishments can help you.

ARLINGTON MEMORIAL CHAPEL
12 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City
Tels. 715-1025, 715-1031, 715-1027
ARLINGTON EAST
Raymundo St. cor. Mercedes Ave., San Miguel, Pasig City
Tels. 747-6590, 747-6609 • Telefax 641-1760
CAPITOL MEMORIAL CHAPELS INC.
1305 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City
Tel. 732-0309, 732-1095
CEBU ROLLING HILLS MEMORIAL CHAPELS INC.
Cebu Branch. A.S. Fortuna Street, Banilad, Mandaue City, Cebu
Tels. 346-2543, 346-2501
COSMOPOLITAN FUNERAL HOMES, INC.
Nivel Hills, Lahug, Cebu City. Tels. 231-0721, 231-3192
COSMOPOLITAN FUNERAL HOMES, INC.
Camus Ext. cor. J. Abad Santos, Davao City
Tels. (082) 227-1201, 227-1289
DON BOSCO CHAPELS
Pasay Road, Makati City. Tel. 894-5032 to 34
DULCE MEMORIAL SERVICES
Jose Abad Santos Ave. cor. Dinalupihan St., Manuguit, Manila
Tels. 712-5102, 741-5126, 741-5133 • Fax No. 711-3084
F. SANTIAGO MEMORIAL HOMES
13 V. Gomez St., San Roque, Marikina City
Tels. 646-1725, 646-1730

FLORESCO FUNERAL HOME
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Tels. 2812983, 2813034, 2810522
FUNERARIA PANGILINAN
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(045) 322-5247, (045) 888-2959
FUNERARIA ANGEL QUIOQUE
No. 67 Pasig Boulevard Extension, Pasig City. Tels. 671-7909, 641-1735
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Calsadang Bago, Pateros, Metro Manila. Tels. 642-6161 to 62
HOLY TRINITY MEMORIAL CHAPELS
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LA FUNERARIA LAWRENCE BAQUIRAN
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Tel. 722-2730, Cell (0917) 8880138, (0917) 8880145
LA FUNERARIA PAZ, INC.
1501 C.M. Recto Ave. cor. T. Mapua, Manila. Tels. 711-6931 to 35; 732-4705
LA FUNERARIA PAZ, INC.
143 G. Araneta Ave. cor. Kaliraya St., Quezon City
Tels. 749-3806 to 11
LA FUNERARIA PAZ, INC.
79 Naguilian Rd., Baguio City. Tel. (074) 443-3337
LOYOLA MEMORIAL CHAPELS
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MARIAN MEMORIAL CHAPELS
Marcos Hiway, Antipolo, Rizal
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264 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City
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Mandalagan, Bacolod City. Tel. 433-7132
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Is recycled steel the 'building block' of the future?

BY CHARLES E. BUBAN

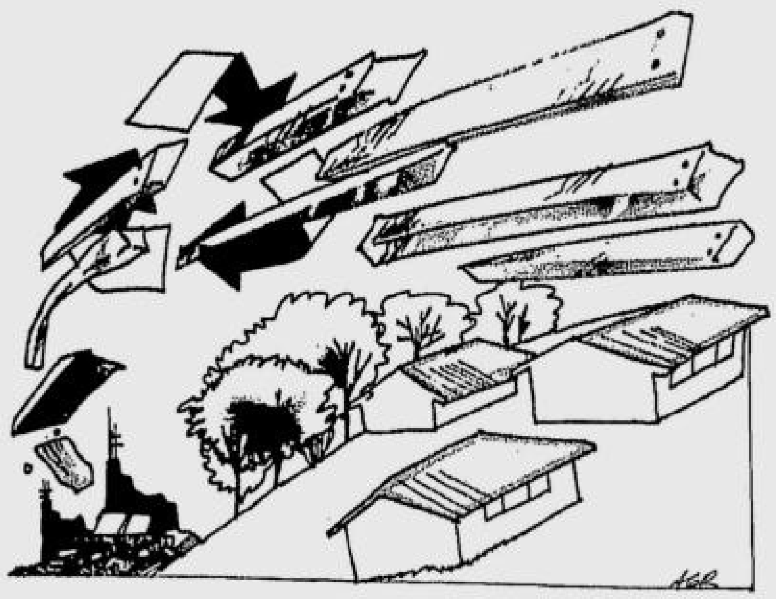

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

BY THE YEAR 2002, an estimated 25 percent of all new homes built in the United States will be totally or partially framed in recycled, recyclable steel. Builders across the United States and Canada are constructing all types of steel-framed homes ranging from multifamily housing developments to single-family residences. An estimated 55,000 homes were built in 1995 using these steel frames.

Steel is an alloy of iron and carbon in which the carbon content ranges up to 2 percent (with a higher carbon content, the material is defined as cast iron). It has long been the preferred building material for commercial construction for reasons of strength, durability and stability. By far, steel is the most widely used material for building the world's infrastructure and industries. It is used to fabricate everything from sewing needles to oil tankers.

Steel is noncombustible, performs well in high wind and seismic areas, and resists corrosion. It doesn't shrink or swell with time or humidity changes, so frames using steel contribute to better exterior appearance, as well as the fit of doors and windows.

Moving into the forefront

Recyclability is another factor that has moved steel to the forefront of construction industry. In fact, the steel used in construction projects today may have been made from steel cans and other steel products recycled yesterday. This is possible because steel scrap is an essential ingredient in making new steel. As steel is recycled, it maintains its strength and integrity so it can be made into one quality product after another.

Although wood remains an important material for contractors, the result is catastrophic: the world's forests are fast shrinking. As a result, wood availability has dwindled; the cost of wood has increased tremendously; and finding better quality wood has become harder than ever.

These are the reasons steel has taken the limelight as next option for building material. Using recycled steel takes the pressure off renewable resources: a typical 186-square-meter home requires about 40 to 50 trees. With steel only the equivalent of about six scrapped automobiles are needed, according to the Steel Recycling Institute, a steel industry association based in the United States.

Recycling steel

When steel products have outlived their useful lives, they can be recycled into new steel. There is no shortage for recyclable steel since there is always a construction and demolition sites where steel abounds.

For the steel industry, using old steel products and other forms of ferrous scrap to produce new steel lowers a variety of steel-making costs and reduces the amount of energy used in the process by 75 percent. That's why more than 65 million tons of steel scraps are recycled each year, according to the association.

In fact, more steel is recycled than paper, aluminum, glass and plastic combined. As an end result, recycling steel scrap also saves landfill space and natural resources. Old motor vehicles are the most recycled. According to Autosteel Online, the number of automobile scrapped in the United States in 1998 compared with the number of cars produced shows a recycling rate of 92 percent.

Autosteel gave a typical process for recycling steel:

- Old cars are typically hauled to an automobile dismantler, where reusable parts are removed before the stripped hulks are recycled.
- After removing reusable components and other items like batteries, tires and fluids, the hulks are usually flattened and shipped by trucks to ferrous scrap processors
- In the shredding process, a car is processed every 45 seconds to generate three sorts: iron and steel; nonferrous metal; and fluff (fabric, rubber, glass, etc.)
- Steel shreds are magnetically loaded into a railcar or truck or stockpiled for future shipment. From there they are transported to steel mills or end markets.

Today, an increasing number of builders have discovered steel as an alternative to construct homes. Steel's sudden growth in residential homes has been fueled by both economic and environmental considerations in the building industry.

Steel is the second-largest industry in the world, after petrochemicals. In Asia, the steel market is worth about US$300 billion.

Better prospects for informal housing seen

BETTER prospects for land tenure and homeownership await the country's informal settlers next year with the institutionalization of radical program reforms this year under the government's Community Mortgage Program, which provides more funds, bigger loans, easier access and faster processes in loan availment, according to the National Home Mortgage Finance Corp.

In a year-ender radio interview, Felino M. Rosales, NHMFC officer-in-charge and executive vice president, also reported that NHMFC president Angelico T. Salud is putting on "emergency footing" the implementation of the agency's urban poor home financing program next year upon the mandate of Housing Secretary Michael T. Defensor, concurrent chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council.

Housing services

This is in response to the government's commitments to accelerate the delivery of social services, particularly housing for the underprivileged, as provided under the recently adopted National Socioeconomic Pact 2001, and also in compliance with the earlier housing pledges made by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her State of the Nation Address, Rosales said.

Among the major program reforms made during the year to meet the informal sector's increased loan need is the adjustment in CMP loan entitlements up to P100,000 and P85,000 per family beneficiary, for those in Metro Manila and highly urbanized areas; and those outside these areas, respectively; up from the previous respective ceilings of P80,000 and P60,000.

For next year's lending, the NHMFC has also sought the approval of government subsidies amounting to P1 billion to sustain the loan requirements of some 23,000 CMP beneficiaries, Rosales informed.

Fast-tracking loan availment

He also cited that to fast-track loan availment by the homeless urban poor, the NHMFC has done the following:

- Reduced by 59 percent the CMP loan requirements.
- Started to decentralize or devolve to its regional offices an initial 50 percent of the loan processing.
- Allowed the CMP loan portion to be used to defray land transfer costs.
- Facilitate under a joint agreement with the Bureau of Internal Revenue the issuance of capital gains tax exemption for CMP-financed lands; and with the Land Registration Authority, the transfer of .titles of said lands to informal settlers' associations.

"The Community Mortgage Program provided a bright spot in this year's implementation of the national shelter program, having contributed a record total of P313.7 million in loans to 8,819 informal settlers this year, exceeding the two previous years' levels of P199 million in year 2000 and P205 million in 1999," Rosales added.

TOPPING-OFF CEREMONIES

Premier urban property developer Megaworld Corp. recently marked the structural completion of the 38-story Tower I of the Paseo Parkview twin-tower luxury residential project in the Makati central business district. From left are engineer Greg Origenes of G. E. Origenes & Associates; architects Jose Recio and Carmelo Casas of Recio + Casas Inc.; A.M. Oreta & Co. senior vice president Canuto Oreta and executive vice president Genaro Pantig; and Megaworld network sales manager Angie Cortez and assistant vice president for sales Noli Hernandez. Located at the corner of Sedeno and Valero Streets in Makati, Paseo Parkview features studio-type, one-, two- and three-bedroom units. Deluxe residential amenities include a helipad, five-star-hotel-standard lobby, gym, tropical swimming pool, videophone entry system and CCTV monitoring.

City garden living at Xavier Hills

AFFORDABLE housing developer Empire East Land Holdings introduces yet another award-winning concept in urban community living with The Xavier Hills, a four cluster mid-rise enclave that brings together a favored location, a unique twin floor home layout, resort-type amenities and buyer-friendly acquisition plans.

Located at the corner of Granada and N. Domingo streets in Quezon City, The Xavier Hills is within easy commuting distance to popular commercial, leisure, medical and learning centers such as the Greenhills Shopping Center, Farmer's Market, Mt. Carmel Church, De La Salle Greenhills, Xavier School, Cardinal Santos Medical Center and the Wack Wack Golf Course. It is also near the soon-to-be-completed LRT Line 2, which will connect to the Edsa MRT when fully operational.

The Xavier Hills features two-level, two-bedroom units in all of its four Mediterranean-inspired residential clusters. Families have a choice of either the 57.5-square-meter executive-type layout or the more spacious 81-square-meter special luxury unit.

The innovative two-story layout efficiently utilizes every square meter of space and provides a high level of privacy by separating the living and dining areas from the sleeping quarters.

A resort-style setting is created through a host of amenities including an adult pool, a wading pool, sun deck, clubhouse with multipurpose area and changing rooms, children's playground, water features, palm trees and lush pocket gardens dotting the development.

Empire East has also put in place numerous building amenities such as a standby generator for lighting common areas, two-level basement parking, overhead water tank and six high-speed elevators for the residents' security and safety. For added convenience, the entrance clusters will also host retail shops at the ground floor.

Excavation and foundation works are currently underway for the project, which is expected to be completed by the second quarter of 2005.

Metrogate project a boost to Silang

SILANG, a quiet town in Cavite, gets a much-needed boost from the development of the Metrogate Silang Estates (MGSE), a residential lot project owned and developed by Moldex Land Inc.

Cavite Gov. Ayong Maliksi attended the recent blessing of the MGSE Clubhouse Complex and expressed his appreciation for Moldex's choice of the town of Silang for the development of a medium to high-end subdivision with modern amenities that include a clubhouse.

The governor, together with Charito Madlansacay, wife of Silang Mayor Ruben M. Madlansacay, cut the ceremonial ribbon. The ceremony was witnessed by Vice Mayor Amboy Velasco; John Marquez, secretary to the Silang mayor; Rey Ignacio M. Diaz, Moldex Realty Inc. president; and Ms. Editha L. Manansala, president of Moldex Realty Marketing Inc.

The MGSE Clubhouse Complex features a golf academy with a putting area, an indoor basketball court with lockers and shower, a spacious function room, game room, coffee shop, music/KTV rooms and soon a jungle pool.

Silang is noted for its lush greenery and tourist spots, including the entrancing Cabag Caves and Our Lady of Lasalette Shrine, a place of serene atmosphere, pine trees, vast lawns and well-tended shrubbery.

Guests lauded the MGSE Clubhouse Complex as an addition to Silang's attractions.

BONIFACIO RIDGE CONDO

Style, comfort and quality on the rise

A NEW level of high comfortable living designed for the 21st century yet priced for young couples and families on the go is rising at the Bonifacio Ridge, the latest condominium project in the Bonifacio Global City.

The initial residential project of the Fort Bonifacio Development Corp. (a unit of leading property developer Metro Pacific Corp.), Bonifacio Ridge is the latest residential address to rise along what is becoming the choice new address for Metro Manila condominium dwellers. Bordering the fairways of the exclusive Manila Golf Club, and built upon the most advanced city infrastructure of any real estate development in the Philippines, Bonifacio Ridge promises to offer style, comfort, safety and technological superiority at a highly competitive price point.

"What attracted me to Bonifacio Ridge is how every unit is linked to high-speed DSL and data lines. I'm a workaholic and I have to be wired at all times," says Alistair Knox, a chartered engineer who has relocated from the United Kingdom to reside in the Philippines. "From every aspect, I'm pleased with my investment in Bonifacio Ridge, and I'm especially looking forward to living in an environment where for once, I'll have no worries about water quality, power supply, poor infrastructure or construction quality and design," he adds.

Construction quality

The appeal of the Bonifacio Ridge condominium also extends into the myriad of construction and quality details, many of which are found in only the most expensive developments.

"The construction quality is evident. Bonifacio Ridge is being constructed by people who know what is required to construct a quality, high-rise condominium, not just to Philippine standards, but on par with those in the United States and Europe," says Knox.

"Moreover, they've presented us with a gamut of fit-out choices to customize our unit, from floor finishes to ceilings. I put a premium on how my new place will feel like home both in form and function," he adds.

He also appreciates the dedicated telecom network provided to all residents and business locators in the Bonifacio Global City. Says Knox: "It's great knowing that the infrastructure has been built for an entire city, not just a simple real estate development. For example, the better telephone systems are a welcome bonus as I need these for my business."

Amenities, conveniences

Bonifacio Ridge boasts of a wide array of amenities and conveniences to make life comfortable, convenient and luxurious. Internally piped gas eliminates the need for dangerous and bulky LPG tanks. A Meralco prepaid card will be available for the first time in the Philippines in Bonifacio Ridge, and is backed up by a 24-hour standby system. Water provided by the Bonifacio Vivendi Water Corp. will deliver the Philippines' safest and healthiest tap water, which rates a higher quality than bottled water. State-of-the-art telecommunications systems will enable fast and reliable Internet, data and cable transmissions.

A lush and colorful landscape has been designed to festoon and adorn the 18-story towers and complement the project's site along the Manila Golf Club. There are jogging paths, a swimming pool, putting green and playgrounds. The fragrance of flowering plants will waft through the air making daily living a complete sensory experience. The architectural design of Bonifacio Ridge has a silhouette with more angles, which yield more windows and corners that allow the free flow of natural air and light as well as provide maximum views. This attention to detail is an effort to give the towers a strong point of difference. All of these are available at an extremely attractive price point.

Affordability

Among the first to purchase a unit is Roman Romulo, a 30-something lawyer at Sycip, Salazar, Hernandez and Gatmaitan Law Office. For Roman, the move to Bonifacio Ridge will be the first-ever step to being completely on his own, and he is thrilled by the prospect of living by himself in a 113-square-meter unit, replete with a picture-perfect window view of evergreen golf fairways. Aside from the independence Roman will gain living in Bonifacio Ridge, the other main attraction for him was the project's affordability.

Bobby Claudio, chief executive officer of Toby's Sports, agrees on the affordability. "It's a good investment, the potential for appreciation is very high," he claims. "Bonifacio Ridge gives value for money; at this price you get to stay in a new city that's being developed with world-class standards."

Prime location

In addition to the amenities and financial advantages, Bonifacio Ridge also enjoys the benefits of sitting on a prime location on a 1.7-hectare lot alongside the Manila Golf and Country Club, which allows magnificent panoramas of lush greenery. It is also conveniently situated minutes away from the Makati and Ortigas Central Business Districts via the Kalayaan Flyover and the C-5 Interchange, making residents within reach of everything and anything.

Gusi Balatbat, an investment banker describes his dilemma before purchasing a unit at Bonifacio Ridge. "I work in Makati but find myself in Ortigas Center often for meetings. I also need to be minutes away from Alabang where my parents reside." He goes on to explain his newfound relief, "Living in Bonifacio Ridge will solve my problems of traveling for extended periods of time when I have to shuttle between all the places I need to be."

Beyond the convenience of location, Alistair Knox says that construction and design quality were his top priorities in purchasing a residential unit. Considering his professional background, he appreciates the structural efficiency, construction techniques adapted and esthetics of the Bonifacio Ridge project.

Says Knox: "The reality is that the project developers have assumed an attitude of 'Let's build it right from the first time, ground-up.' So that means for me, over the long term, the investment I'm making is all the more worthwhile since I won't have to worry about water leaks, cracks or the like. I know construction, I've seen how Bonifacio Ridge differs from just about every other project I've seen built in the Philippines, and I'm very excited."

These future residents of Bonifacio Ridge are driven to make the most out of life and enjoy it on their way to the top. They expect and deserve the best. The confidence they have in Bonifacio Ridge is attributed to FBDC's commitment to deliver only the best. They have indeed found a perfect home in Bonifacio Ridge.

NEW COMMERCIAL BUILDING

The two-story "K" Line Air Building, located along The Strip at Laguna BelAir, recently opened its doors to serve the needs of residents of the township and nearby communities. The newest commercial structure to rise in the area is a one-stop shop for freight and cargo and travel processing needs with "K" Line Air, Asia Link Cargo Phils. Inc. and Travel-Managers International as its anchor tenants. The commercial center of Laguna BelAir, a township development of Empire East Land Holdings Inc., is zoned into two: The Strip along the township's Rodeo Drive and The Center, which lines the Sta.Rosa-Tagaytay National Highway.

FPDSavills closes 79 residential transactions

LEADING property consultant FPD-Savills reported closing a total of 79 residential transactions for the first three quarters of the year.

Tina Templeton, associate director for residential agency, said the transactions from January to September 2001 involved around 17,000 square meters of residential space.

"These include two major sales transactions involving prime properties in the metropolis," Templeton adds, referring to the sale of the plush house and lot in Parañaque City and a 300-square-meter unit in the prestigious Pacific Plaza Towers in the Fort Bonifacio Global City. FPD-Savills is the exclusive marketing agent for the Pacific Plaza Towers.

A majority of the transactions involved leases in prime apartment projects adjacent to the Makati Central Business District.

According to David Leechiu, FPD-Savills director and GM for agency, the figure far exceeded the group's expectations and showed that a committed leasing team can achieve considerable success.

"FPDSavills has always been strong in residential, and with our renewed focus on corporate accounts, we are the favored agents as we help fill in many projects," Leechiu says. "We have found this to be beneficial to our tenants as we are actually able to achieve more favorable terms and conditions."

REAL ESTATE

CESAR D. MANGAWANG, Editor

TEST PILOT SITE

Suburban residents get internet, phone access

BY TESSA R. SALAZAR

RESIDING in an upscale suburban area but having no access to phone lines and the Internet?

Picture you and your family living in the south, say Sta. Rosa in Laguna, but having no direct phone line access to check on them while you work in Manila or Makati. Your mobile phone bills reach as high as P12,000 monthly because you have to call home so often. You also find yourself staying late in the office because you don't have Internet at home. Worse, your kids also need to surf the Net.

Many residents in the suburbs actually experience this scenario. In this age where construction means not just putting up buildings or expanding housing development but setting up cyberspace infrastructure, upscale subdivision developers are seeing phone lines and Internet connections as basic necessities to woo future dwellers.

The homeowners association of Laguna BelAir granted a permit to telecom carrier Bell Telecoms to initially test pilot several households. In just two weeks, 25 residents of Phase 4 and 5 became subscribers. BellTel sales manager Karrie Buenafe said that about 60 percent got voice and data (broadband Internet) connections while 40 percent got voice connection (phone line).

The project is targeting 1,600 subscribers for the next 12 months. The carrier's thrust is to service the special economic zone. Phases of network construction include high demand areas like Cebu, Baguio and Davao.

The services include direct Metro Manila phone line numbers to those who have none. This means no long distance call charges anymore. Access to wireless broadband Internet is activated to willing subscribers.

A broadband connection to the Internet is a fat pipeline running in and out of a home or business. It carries voice, video and data information. A broadband pipeline is like a fire hose while a dial up service is like a garden hose.

ESTHETICALLY pleasing transmitter befitting upscale Laguna BelAir.

Buenafe said that the client profile in Manila is different from that of the suburbs like Laguna. The Manila clientele are schools, big businesses and big Internet service providers. The clients in the suburbs are small and medium enterprises and homeowners.

Unlike copper wire cables that take time to be laid down and are cost intensive, the telecom carrier uses fixed wireless system and could connect a homeowner in less than a week.

Fixed wireless technology, said the technology carrier, is a wireless system that is available in 80 percent of Metro Manila and southern provinces like Laguna and Cavite. Bell Telecom says it has a wide geographical reach, easily deployable, and is not an eyesore in a home since it has compact equipment.

Its services vary. The i-direct service comes equipped with telephone/fax lines for direct distance dialing and international direct dialing, free e-mail and webhosting depending on the package.

The i-direct personal service, on the other hand, has an on-demand 56 kilobits per second dial up Internet access, 99 hours free Internet access in excess of P0.50 cents per minute, one e-mail address free and one telephone line for dial up.

The advantage, says Phase 5 homeowner Ethel Lim, a new phone line subscriber, is that the phone line reduced her expensive mobile phone bills. Her household doesn't have to pay long distance chargers that users of the Laguna line do.

"The disadvantage, though, is if there is a brownout, phone line access is cut. You could, however, purchase a gadget that you can attach to power your line in such cases," said Lim. She added that the reception, even during heavy rains, is clear.

Lim even plans to avail of the broadband Internet service.

Laguna BelAir Subdivision executive assistant Carina Juan said that one advantage is the simultaneous use of the fax machine, phone line and the Internet.

"The entry of the new telecom carrier would give the residents an option of the service provider they want. A lot of homeowners here have businesses in Manila and Makati and many of them work abroad. This could be a big advantage to them," she said.

Pag-Ibig open to talks with delinquent homeowners

BY ROMULO O. PONTE
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

BIÑAN, Laguna—The Pag-Ibig Fund management said it is open to negotiations and dialogue with homeowner-borrowers who have appealed for concessions regarding their monthly amortization problems and can "defer foreclosure proceedings" for the time being but not indefinitely. Rafael O. Abaño, Pag-Ibig vice president for collection, told the INQUIRER that the homeowners belonging to the group Sagip Tahanan at Kabuhayan ng Laguna Inc. (Sagip) had already proposed the restructuring of their housing loans during their earlier meeting and that the Pag-Ibig board has already approved it. Abaño said Pag-Ibig has always been making efforts to extend help to its borrowing clients who are in financial straits.

Some forms of assistance the agency gives, he said, are the deferment of foreclosure proceedings for housing units whose borrowers have payment delinquency and the condoning of penalty charges covered by Republic Act 8501.

Positive gestures

Evangeline Pallones, Sagip president, who led more than 1,000 homeowner members who flocked on Dec. 12 to the Pag-Ibig Fund and the National Home Mortgage and Finance Corp. offices in Manila, said they went there bringing with them P1,000 each as payment for their individual loans. Charito A. Anunciacion, Sagip secretary, said they were at least pleased by the positive gestures accorded them by the NHMFC authorities who accepted the amount estimated at about P500,000, even though they were allegedly told by Ruben Lacet, collection manager, that "they are accepting the amount without any condition."

Anunciacion quoted Lacet as saying that the P1,000 they each gave would be considered a deposit while negotiations are ongoing and will be made as down payment once a resolution is made.

She said Lacet told her that by accepting the amount, he would not sign any document, and that the P1,000 could also be considered a rental. Anunciacion showed the INQUIRER the minutes of the meeting with the NHMFC officials that reported that the corporation's president, Angelito Salud, has assured them that as a gesture of goodwill and to acknowledge the good intention of Sagip to help the government, he has ordered that those who paid P1,000 each will not be given foreclosure orders while negotiations are being held.

The INQUIRER tried several times to reach the NHMFC officials for their comments but was told politely by an office personnel that they were attending a very important meeting.

Pallones, however, was dismayed by the nonacceptance by Pag-Ibig officials of the Sagip members' P1,000 payment as "a gesture of goodwill and earnest desire to pay their debts amid the economic downturn."

Legal problems

Abaño, who admitted being caught off-guard by Sagip's unannounced mass visit to the Pag-Ibig Office in Makati City, explained that they could not accept the P1,000 because it would entail some legal problems. He advised the Pag-Ibig members of Sagip, which number about 300 homeowners, to stick to their previous agreement.

The Pag-Ibig official reminded the clients that any "debts incurred are made to be paid."

He advised them not to insist on demanding not to pay their debts because nothing will result from it.

Abaño, however, assured homeowners that the new proposal of Sagip (P1,000 monthly payment) will be studied seriously by the board.

Developers upbeat on housing trends

LOW-COST and economic housing producers affiliated with the Subdivision and Housing Developers Association have expressed confidence that the local housing and property development business will pick up starting next year.

They attribute such positive outlook to the expected public expenditures under the national shelter program geared toward social amelioration, new job generation and economic pump-priming.

Noel S. Gonzales, SHDA national president, noted that the firming up this year of a supportive economic environment and macroeconomic policies to bolster a mass housing comeback would boost private housing sector confidence in realizing the emerging business prospects next year.

Housing units

In her State of the Nation Address, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo committed to make available at least 100,000 housing units to the formal sector and 50,000 units to the informal sector up to July 2002, with a conservative estimated value in loan expenditures of at least P30 billion. The bulk of the housing units will begin to be produced and delivered during the first half of next year, so as to spark a flurry of production of activities, Gonzales projected.

The major indicators that point to the preparations already made this year to deliver on this political and socio-economic commitments include the issuance of Executive Order 45, which effectively reduces to 90 days the permit issuance process for a housing subdivision development to commence, he cited.

"This is a strong and significant signal, which perhaps no other administration had attempted to make. And if the government could deliver on this commitment to reduce administrative and bureaucratic delays, then the private housing sector has reason to expect the attainment of the government's housing targets up to next semester of year 2002," Gonzales emphasized.

Creation of housing dep't

Another signal that the administration is bent on delivering on its housing commitments is the joint executive and legislative efforts for the creation of a Department of Housing that could provide a unified direction and control on the government programs and resources directed toward low-cost housing delivery, he said.

However, a key component of this housing delivery system that needs further strengthening is the provision of an effective guarantee mechanism to private sector loans for subdivision development and mortgage financing, which is critical to the participation of both government and private financial institutions and the sustainability of housing finance, Gonzales clarified.

As a contribution to this effort, the SHDA has also established SHDA Guaranty Fund Inc., which provides developers a first, two-year guarantee cover to loans the developers originate under the Pag-Ibig home financing program, he said.

PROJEC NAGER
CENT ENGEEN G & SUP

FIRST-CLASS RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL ESTATE IN ORIENTAL MINDORO

Neo Calapan, the latest first-class residential and commercial estate in Calapan, Oriental Mindoro, offers a fully operational hotel known as Filipiniana Calapan Resort Complex (a franchise of Microtel Inns and Suites now on its first anniversary), a residential and commercial strip complete with parks and playground, hospital, university site, church, mall, among others. Owned and developed by Filipiniana Resorts Development Corp.—member of the RGV Group, Neo Calapan recently held its groundbreaking rites. From left are Chalie P. Valencia; RGV Group chair and chief executive officer Rodolfo G. Valencia; Calapan City Mayor Arnan C. Panaligan; Pinamalayan Mayor Wilfredo L. Hernandez; Victoria Mayor Alfredo O. Ortega; Rosalie M. Hernandez; and FRDC president Sammy.G. Valencia.

Coconut fiber as roof boards developed

ROOFS without ceilings? Try coconut fiber residues for your roofing.

Corrugated roof boards made of coconut coir, known as the coconut fiber cement board or CFB, show good insulation properties such that a house can be devoid of ceiling. These are also cheap, yet durable building components for houses.

Researchers L. Peñamora, R. Palomar and N. Melencion of the Philippine Coconut Authority-Zamboanga Research Center developed the CFB. They mixed coconut coir with cement at 70:30 ratio, formed these into corrugated mat by using steel mold, and then pressed it to the desired thickness.

The board measures 60 cm long, 40 cm wide and 12 mm thick. It has a density of 650 kg/cu.m.

The boards are as good as other commercial roof materials like the galvanized iron (GI) sheets. These are water- and weather-proof, and are resistant to fire, termite, fungi and rots.

The board also possesses good working and excellent bending properties.

It can be set up in the roof system without any difficulty and can be coated with different types of sealants and roof paints. Because cement is the binding material, the product can be adapted in a wide range of places and environmental conditions.

The CFB also has high dimensional stability when soaked in water, with a water absorption capacity of 32 percent and thickness swelling of 4.2 percent, which surpasses the specifications set by PHILSA Standards 105-1975.

Its low thermal conductivity (K-value of 0.090 W/m. K or 0.019 BTU/in/hr ft2) indicates its good insulation properties.

The PCA-ZRC attests that while the flame test showed that the board could be burned, it is rather slow with minimal smoke as compared to other wood-based materials.

This technology is one of this year's finalists in Region 9's annual research and development symposium conducted by the Western Mindanao Agriculture and Resources Research and Development Consortium.

The Wesmarrdec is one of the 14 regional consortiums established by the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development-Department of Science and Technology (PCARRD-DOST), which pools together different research institutions in the regions to implement cohesive, relevant, dynamic and responsive programs for national development.

REST AND RECREATION PARADISE

The public is invited to view Georgetown Lakeview Vacation Estate's Clubhouse, an 800-meter rest and recreation paradise designed to give residents a private retreat away from the bustling city. This spacious coffee lounge is one of the features of the clubhouse. Other features are a game area for billiards, table tennis, darts, chess and video game enthusiasts; an indoor heated swimming pool where both kids and adults alike can take a relaxing dip; a modern fitness facility; basketball and tennis courts; and a view deck overlooking Taal Lake.

Private realty groups reconvene housing council

THE COUNTRY'S major private real estate associations have reconvened the Private Consultative Council for Shelter to provide the private housing sector a unified advocacy body and a singular forum for consultations with the government housing agencies to promote affordable homeownership.

The PCCS, originally composed of the Builders Alliance Toward Action (Bata), National Real Estate Association, Organization of Socialized Housing Developers of the Philippines, Subdivision and Housing Developers Association and the Women in Shelter and its Environment (WISE), now also includes the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders Association (Creba).

Unification

Romeo Thaddeus R. Liamzon Jr., concurrent Bata and PCCS chair, said that the six housing organizations have committed to unify under the consultative council, in a memorandum of agreement recently signed by their respective officers.

Among those who signed the agreement are Liamzon; Jose V. Manalad, NREA chair; Giovanni J. Olivares, OSHDP president; Noel S. Gonzales, SHDA president; Carolina S. Osteria, WISE president; and Charlie V. Gorayeb, Creba president.

The agreement signing was witnessed by Housing Secretary Michael T. Defensor and Rep. Corazon Malanyaon, vice chair, House committee on housing and urban development.

Strategic partner

Liamzon also said the PCCS would continue to harness the energies, expertise and resources of the private sector as the strategic partner of the government in mass housing production.

"Because of their key role in housing delivery, the various organizations of the private sector involved in housing production, need to be united in their approach and strategy in working together with their government counterparts for a cohesive direction toward an effective and sustainable national shelter program," Liamzon said.

A cohesive and united private housing sector under the PCCS will be beneficial not only to real estate practitioners, but will also boost affordable homeownership and contribute to the enlivening of the national economy, he said.

The PCCS was also a signatory to the National Socioeconomic Pact 2001, where Liamzon served as co-chair of the panel on housing of the National Socioeconomic Summit, jointly with Defensor.

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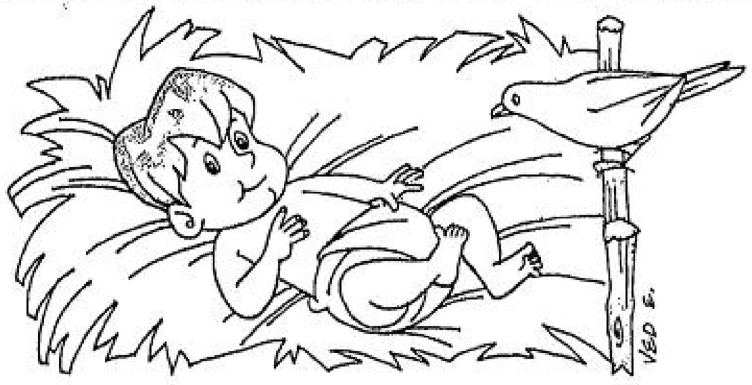

From His heavenly mansions
to the lowly manger stall, it was
a demotion for the Son of God
to be born on Christmas Day, but
He came that we may have life

Is it worth the hassle?

BY GRACE SHANGKUAN KOO, PH.D.
Contributor

WHEN queues get longer and traffic gets worse, when tempers get shorter and the "to-do-list" gets more urgent, we know that Christmas is here. The thought of Christmas elicits feelings of both anticipation and apprehension. It's the time of year we look most forward to, yet why does it also bring a nagging doubt of whether it will be worth the hassle? And when the yearend vacation is over and days are back to normal, one wonders what has really happened and have the holidays already gone by?

Maybe we expected too much, or maybe we had not planned well enough? Maybe it could have been better had we not planned for anything.

Stress

The older I get the earlier I buy Christmas gifts. I would not want to be caught again in Virra Mall on the 24th, squeezed in a sea of a thousand shoppers, dizzily trying to make sense of children's toys and matching each to a godson or relative's son. Shopping is not a pleasure on such days, you bet, and the time crunch makes one quite irritable. Who needs another headache on Christmas?

All those years in high school, I approached Christmas with both excitement and anxiety. Caroling contests induced unwanted tension when you were always assigned to take charge of your amateur batchmates for the competition. We won most contests, if not all; but the pressure to live up to a better performance each year only added to the stress. When I was a church choir conductor, each Christmas meant months of preparation and lots of patience to spare, to train volunteer-choristers for a presentable Christmas Eve concert. With a limited budget and a demanding schedule, it could have been easy to lose your cool! Thank God I did not!

Christmas means vacation for my maids. That spelled S-T-R-E-S-S when I was a mother with a toddler and an infant. No one would be more grateful for the presence of *yayas* and maids than during Christmas. Each meal with my baby was a struggle and a plea, and each bang from the neighbor's firecracker brought a startle and a cry. Then we decided we'd better leave the country and say goodbye to the year and welcome the new in some foreign land; we would come home about the same time when the maids would come back from the provinces—both parties exhausted from the trips.

Indulgence

Food and more food, wine and parties—these have been symbols for Christmas in a land where six meals a day are quite normal. We give ourselves more space for indulgences—whether in shopping, eating or sleeping. It looks as if we are **the** birthday celebrants who deserve some great rewards, just because the year is about to end. Christmas is the best time for businessmen to appeal to our vanities—be it a dress or jewelry, a computer or a Palm, a facial or a trip—we justify quickly the rationale of having such. Easier, I'm sure, during Christmas time.

We indulge not only ourselves, but our loved ones, too. Children who grow up with generous grandparents and several sets of godparents will surely learn **not** how to save. Cash in cards, food and fineries come in abundance to those who do not know the value or the meaning, while others barely have enough to last another day.

Commercialism

Santa Claus gets more mileage than the baby Jesus Christ. Hollywood films gross so much more than the churches that need donation. Cards are great business and gift-wraps sell like hotcakes. Toys are especially tempting in this gifting season. No one wants to be a Scrooge or a modern-day Grinch, and so we go with the flow of stuffing ourselves with things.

'Tis the time for concerts, and artists work themselves to exhaustion. The busier one is at this time, the greater his name in business. Christmas has become one huge **entertainment**, to amuse and delight a satiated crowd demanding novelty and dazzled by effects. Restaurants come up with some fancy menus to satisfy the palette of the moneyed customers. Hundreds of young piglets are doomed on Christmas Eve; their prices get higher as the celebrations draw nearer. There are always enterprising vendors who can grab a nice little corner to sell their wares and exotic

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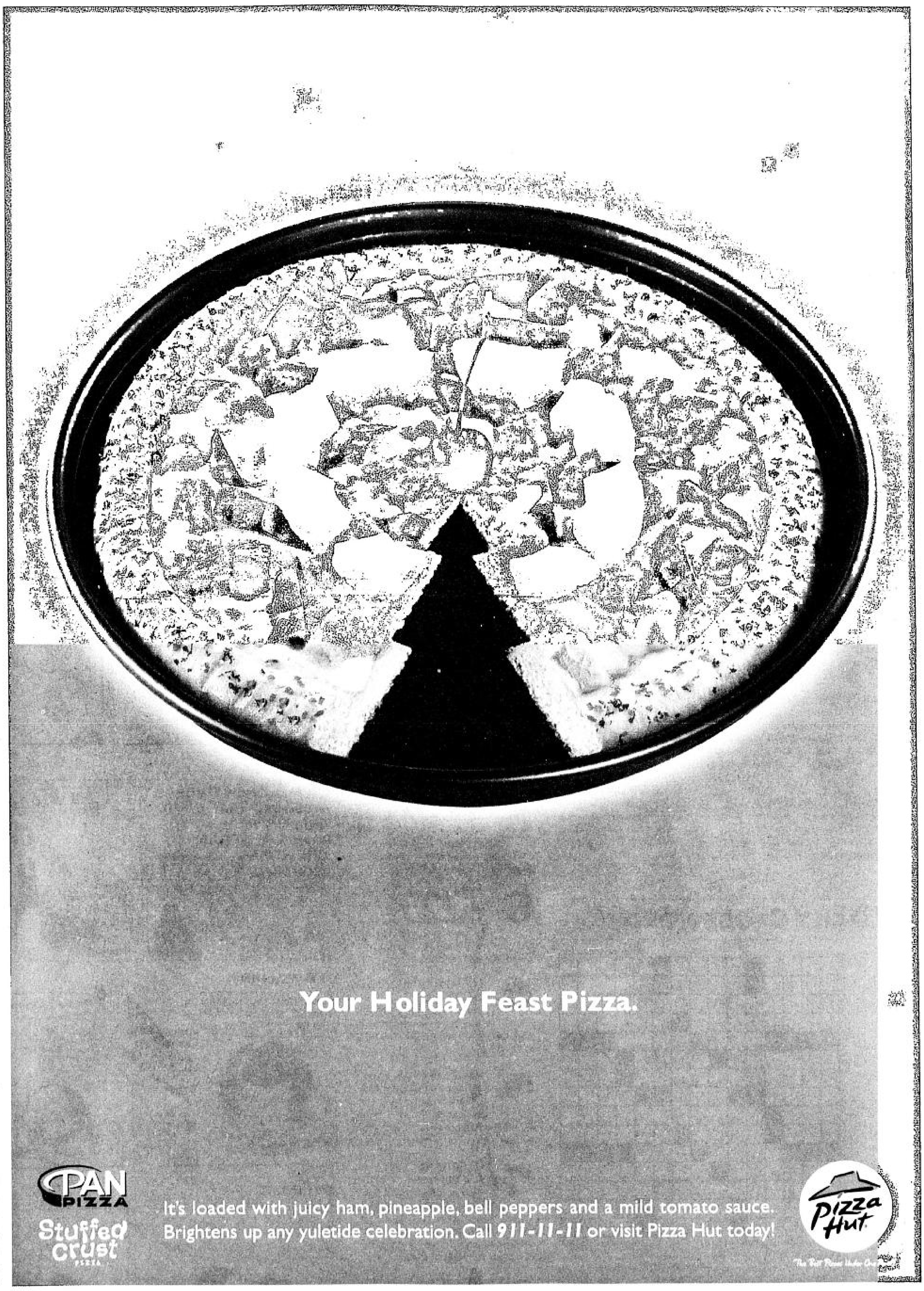
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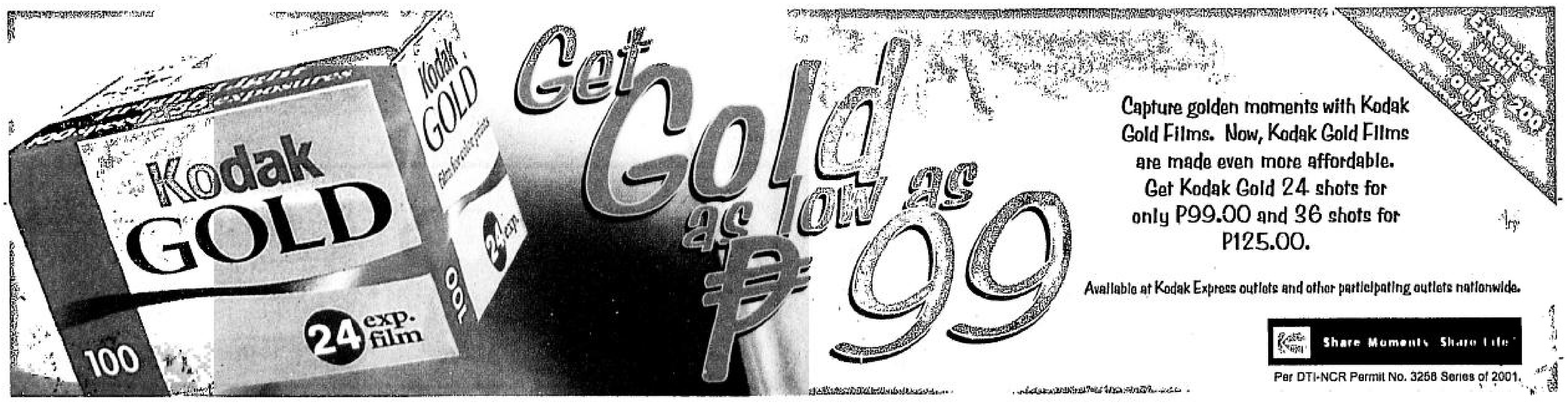
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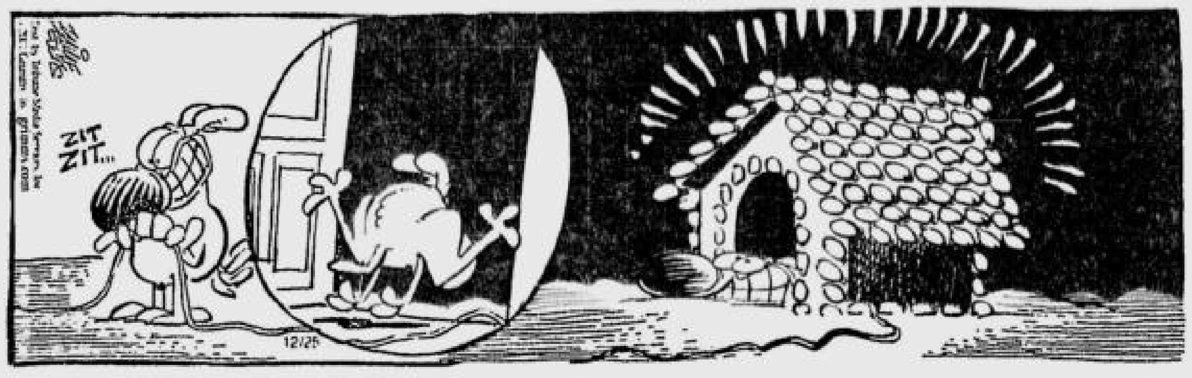
BY MIKE PETERS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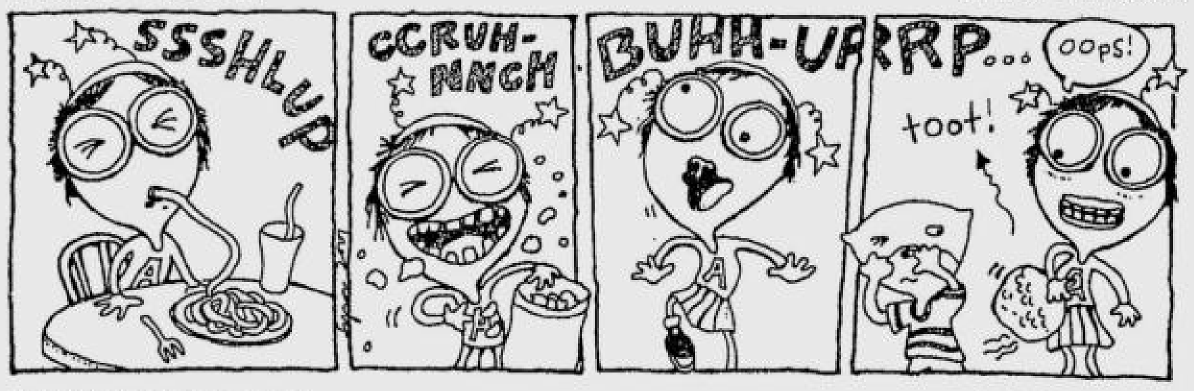
ANIMAL CRACKER

BY FRED WAGNER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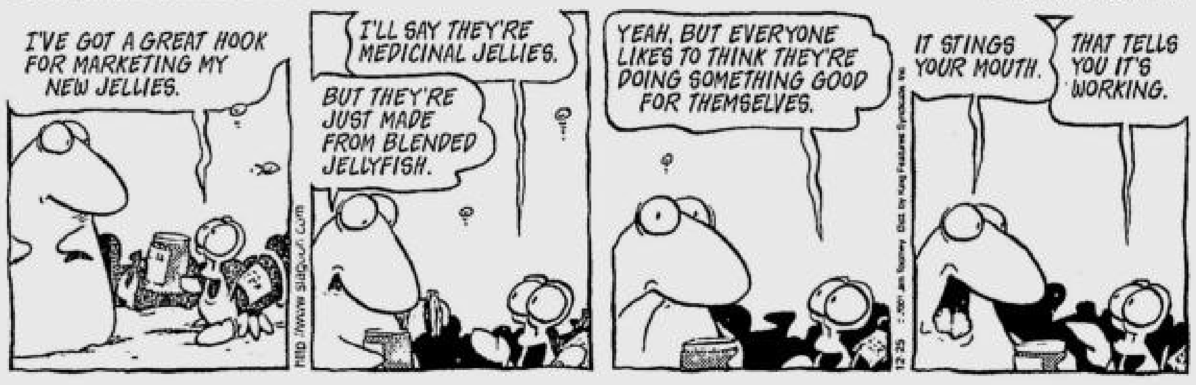
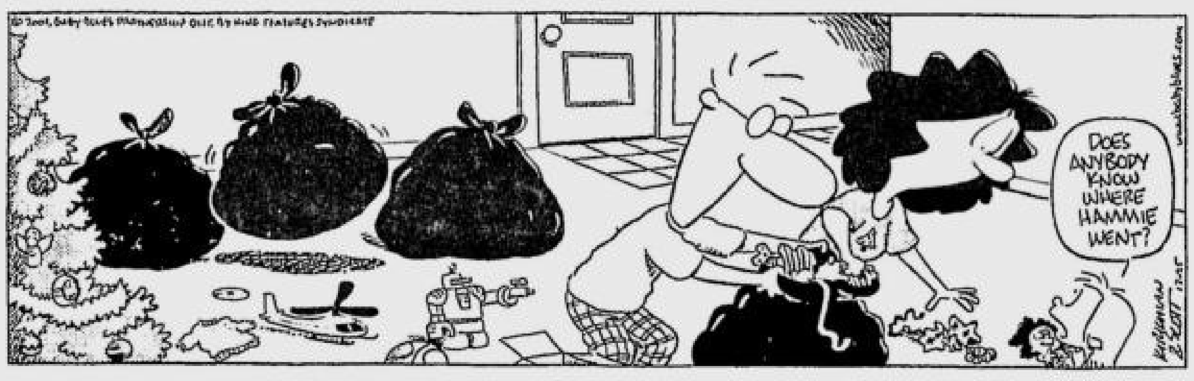
SHERMAN'S LAGOON

BY JIM TOOMEY


I'VE GOT A GREAT HOOK FOR MARKETING MY NEW JELLIES.
I'LL SAY THEY'RE MEDICINAL JELLIES.
BUT THEY'RE JUST MADE FROM BLENDED JELLYFISH.
YEAH, BUT EVERYONE LIKES TO THINK THEY'RE DOING SOMETHING GOOD FOR THEMSELVES.
IT STINGS YOUR MOUTH.
THAT TELLS YOU IT'S WORKING.

BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


DOES ANYBODY KNOW WHERE HAMMIE WENT?

HOROSCOPE

BY EUGENIA LAST

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Sissy Spacek, Rod Serling, Barbara Mandrell, Humphrey Bogart

Happy Birthday: You will be a driving force this year. You may face challenges along the way, but nothing you can't handle. Being dramatic, witty and colorful, you will be a hard act to follow. This is the year for you to go after a leadership position. Your numbers are 9, 16, 22, 27, 41, 46

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Do what you can to put everyone in your family at ease today. With a little extra effort you can make it easier for the young and old alike to enjoy themselves.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Put your differences aside. This is the time to rejoice not complain. Look toward an enjoyable day with your family.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Don't let relatives get you down. You may be surprised if you visit family without any preconceived expectations.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): You will have made excellent choices this year when it comes to family and friends. Togetherness will put you into a good mood.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): It's getting together with those you love that will make this day so enjoyable. You are big-hearted and generous and because of this you will be well received by others.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You may not feel like spending the day with lots of people. If you play your cards right you can make an appearance and get on with your day.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): This may be a quiet but thoughtful day for you. A personal and loving atmosphere will bring you the greatest joy and a time of reflection.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Your generosity this year will definitely pay off. You have much greater insight into your future and you should be able to relax.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You may face a few restrictions or limitations if you overindulge. Gauge yourself and you will have a much better time.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You've probably gone overboard this year when it comes to gift giving. This year you have been feeling a little more generous, and you'll please all your loved ones with your thoughtful gifts and warm wishes.

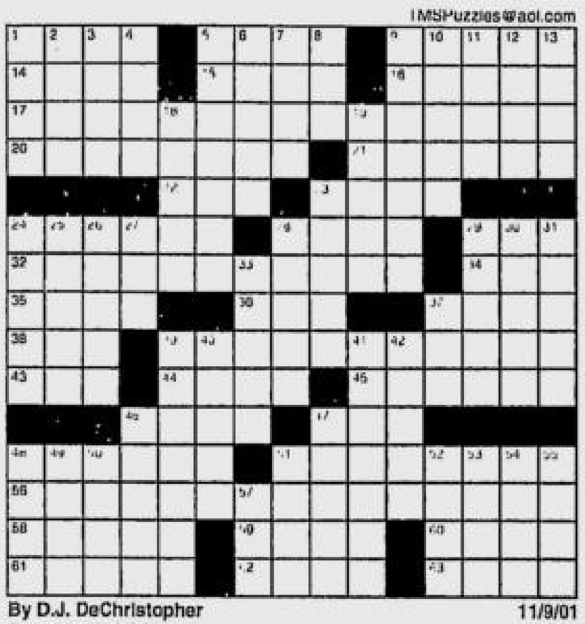
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Fec. 18): You've outdone yourself this year and you should be proud of your choices. Everyone will admire you for your creative and insightful gifts.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Your kind gestures to help others get through this holiday will not go unnoticed. You will find yourself befriending new people and getting to know old friends on a much deeper level.

Birthday Baby: You have the right attitude. You are stable, loving and very loyal. You have a game plan and built-in sense of what will make you happy.

DAILY CROSSWORD

IMSPuzzles@aol.com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56 57
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61 62 63

By D.J. DeChristopher
Staten Island, NY

11/9/01

ACROSS
1 Gain
5 View quickly
9 Stout sticks
14 Perry's penner
15 Kissable girl?
16 Capital on the Red River
17 O, sequentially
20 Functional brooch
21 Off the liner
22 Some NFL linemen
23 Sacred service
24 Taiwan's capital
28 Welles character
29 Best pitcher
32 O, punningly
34 Trail behind
35 Concerning
36 Crosses (out)
37 Sicilian peak
38 FDR group
39 O, biologically
43 Swed. flyers
44 Crude cross
45 Casualties
46 Helpful hints
47 One of the girls
48 Nebraska river
51 Preservative liquid
56 O, chemically
58 "The Wake of the Ferry II" painter
59 One with regrets
60 Tadpoles' milieu
61 Examines
62 Automobile pioneer Ransom
63 Table scraps

DOWN
1 Umps' cousins
2 Clapton or Ambler
3 __-Romeo (Italian car)
4 Tennis player Korda
5 Doubter
6 Caesar's dog
7 Bus. letter directive
8 Bk. after Ezra
9 Nimitz or Gould
10 Shaping machine
11 "Do __ others as..."
12 Afrikaner
13 Father
18 Stephanie Zimbalist's dad
19 Frankie or Cleo
23 "Midnight Cowboy" role
24 Russian rulers
25 Bewildered
26 Whits
27 Lion, Tiger or Bear
28 Struck with a bent leg
29 Countertenors
30 Hiawatha's craft
31 Yikes!
33 Montreal team
37 Golfer Ernie
39 God of the sea and satellite of Neptune
40 Alpine warble
41 Muscles used for bending
42 Detergent ingredient
46 Ready to swing
47 Employed
48 Hey you!
49 Singer Lovett
50 Book after Joel
51 Sports infraction
52 Secretarial error
53 Composer Stravinsky
54 Jacket slit
55 Tips
57 To's partner?

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

R	E	A	D	S	■	S	C	U	B	A	■	S	D	I
A	P	A	R	T	■	E	R	R	E	D	■	H	A	D
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E	Y	E	■	E	N	T	R	Y	■	D	Y	N	E	S

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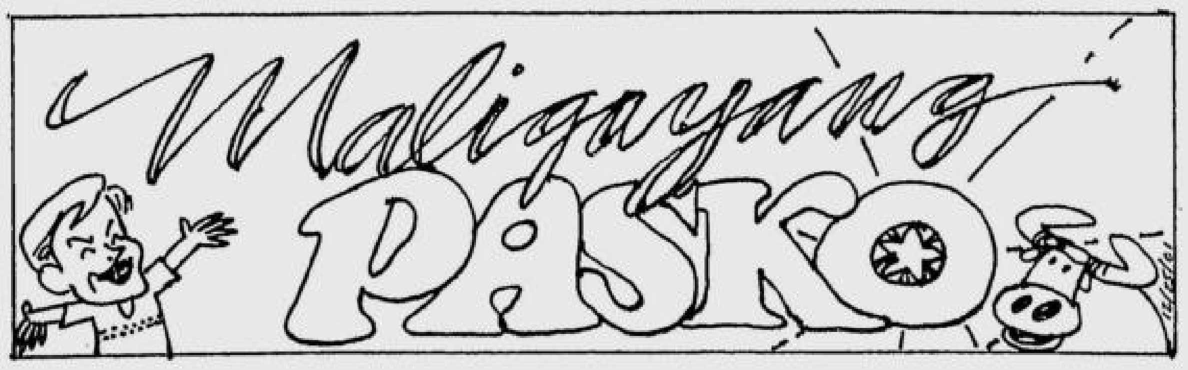
11/9/01

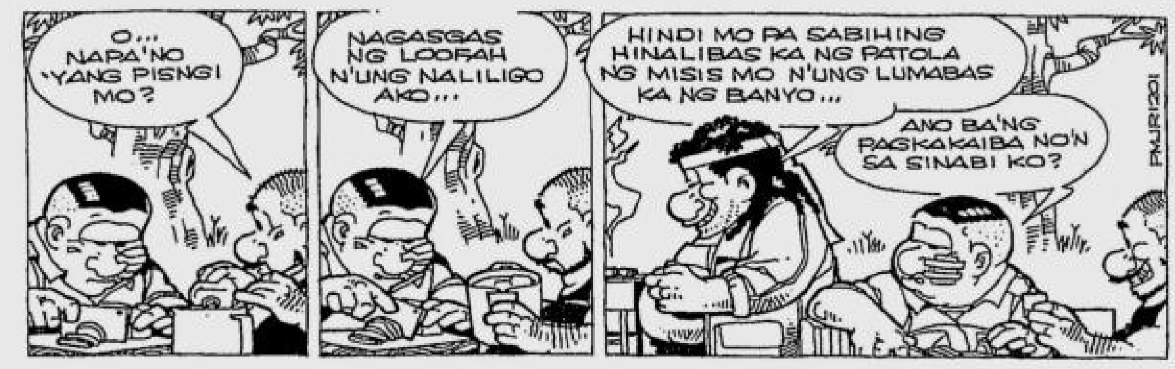
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


Maligayang
PASKO

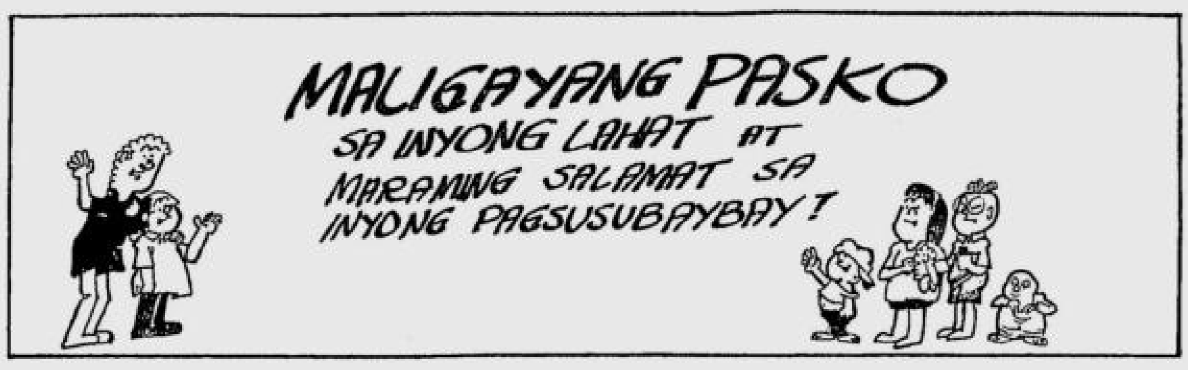
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


O... NAPA'NO 'YANG PISNGI MO?
NAGASGAS NG LOOFAH N'UNG NALILIGO AKO...
HINDI MO PA SABIHING HINALIBAS KA NG PATOLA NG MISIS MO N'UNG LUMABAS KA NG BANYO...
ANO BA'NG PAGKAKAIBA NO'N SA SINABI KO?

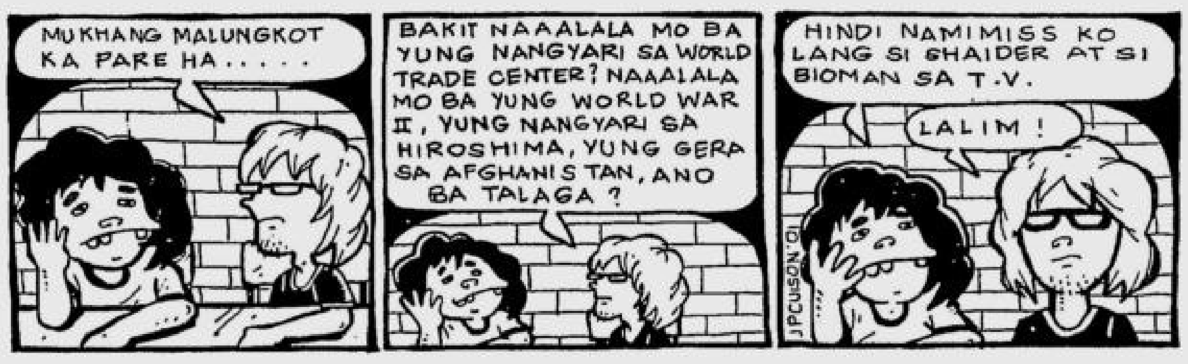
SIMO

BY EDGAR DIONELA


MALIGAYANG PASKO
SA INYONG LAHAT AT
MARAMING SALAMAT SA
INYONG PAGSUSUBAYBAY!

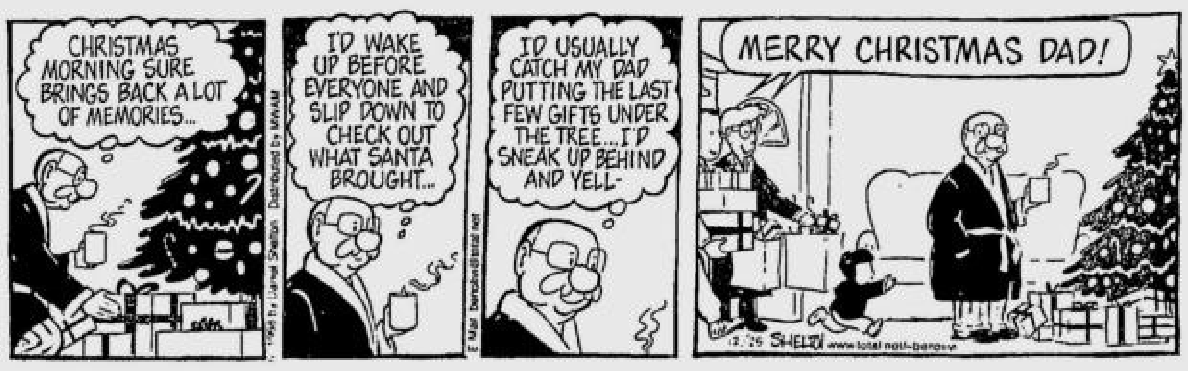
GARAPATA BLOOD

BY JOHN PAUL CUISON


MUKHANG MALUNGKOT KA PARE HA.....
BAKIT NAAALALA MO BA YUNG NANGYARI SA WORLD TRADE CENTER? NAAALALA MO BA YUNG WORLD WAR II, YUNG NANGYARI SA HIROSHIMA, YUNG GERA SA AFGHANISTAN, ANO BA TALAGA?
HINDI NAMIMISS KO LANG SI SHAIDER AT SI BIOMAN SA T.V.
LALIM!
JPCUISON '01

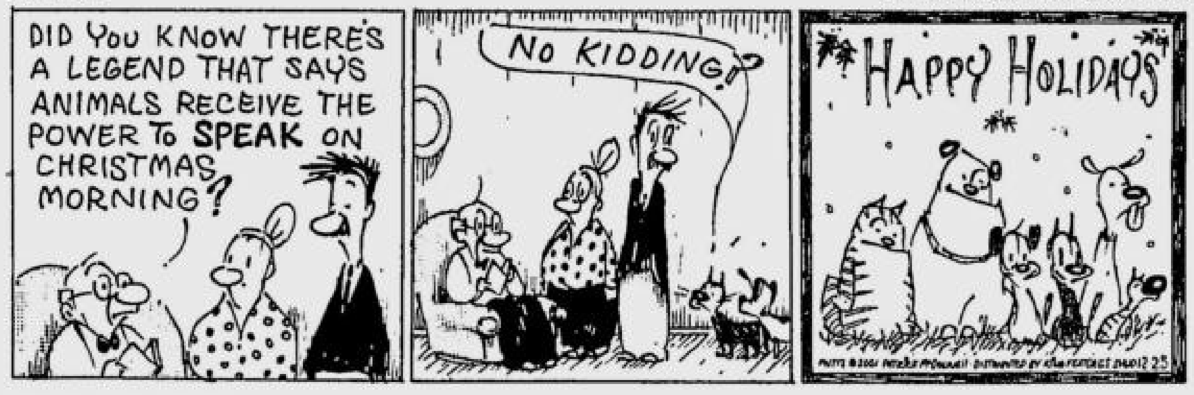
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


CHRISTMAS MORNING SURE BRINGS BACK A LOT OF MEMORIES...
I'D WAKE UP BEFORE EVERYONE AND SLIP DOWN TO CHECK OUT WHAT SANTA BROUGHT...
I'D USUALLY CATCH MY DAD PUTTING THE LAST FEW GIFTS UNDER THE TREE... I'D SNEAK UP BEHIND AND YELL-
MERRY CHRISTMAS DAD!

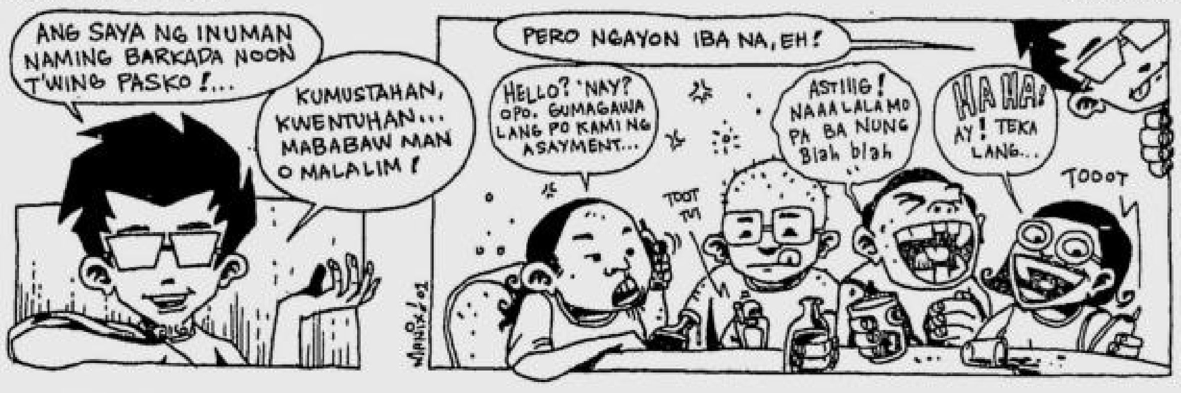
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


DID YOU KNOW THERE'S A LEGEND THAT SAYS ANIMALS RECEIVE THE POWER TO SPEAK ON CHRISTMAS MORNING?
NO KIDDING?
HAPPY HOLIDAYS

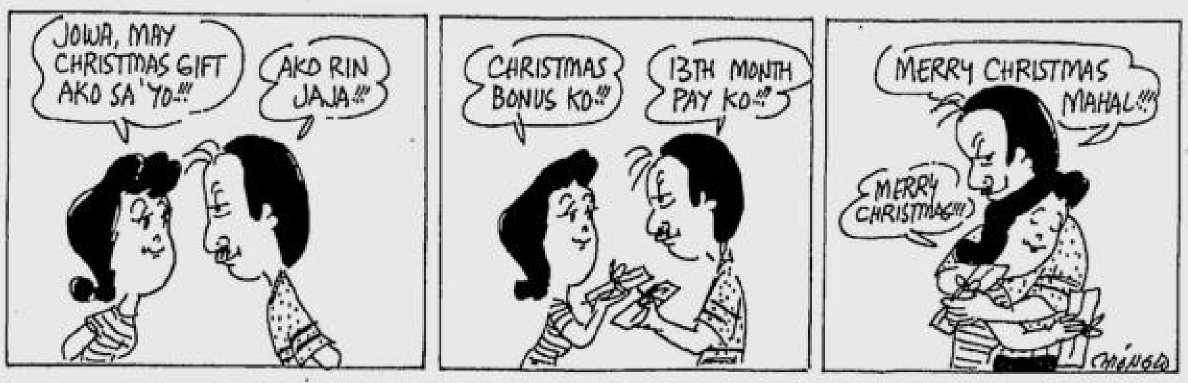
KIKO MACHINE

BYMANIX


ANG SAYA NG INUMAN NAMING BARKADA NOON T'WING PASKO!...
KUMUSTAHAN, KWENTUHAN... MABABAW MAN O MALALIM!
PERO NGAYON IBA NA, EH!
HELLO? 'NAY? OPO. GUMAGAWA LANG PO KAMI NG ASAYMENT...
ASTIIIG! NAAALALA MO PA BA NUNG Blah blah
HA HA! AY! TEKA LANG...
TOOT
TOOOT

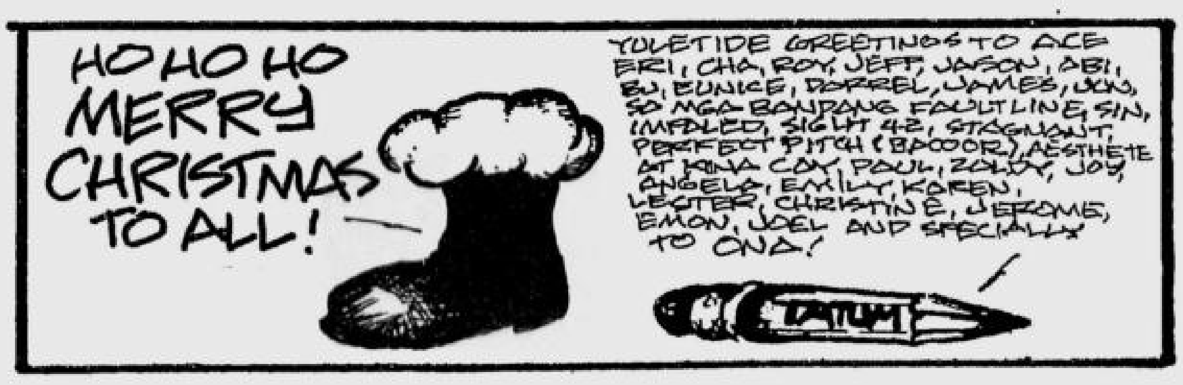
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


JOWA, MAY CHRISTMAS GIFT AKO SA 'YO!!!
AKO RIN JAJA!!!
CHRISTMAS BONUS KO!!!
13TH MONTH PAY KO!!!
MERRY CHRISTMAS MAHAL!!!
MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU & TATUM MILAMBILING


HO HO HO MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!
YULETIDE GREETINGS TO ACE ERI, CHA, ROY, JEFF, JASON, ABI, BJ, EUNICE, DORREL, JAMES, JON, SA MGA BANDANG FAULTLINE, SIN, IMPALED, SIGHT 42, STAGNANT, PERFECT PITCH (BPOOOR), AESTHETE AT KINA COY, PAUL, ZOLDY, JOY, ANGELA, EMILY, KAREN, LESTER, CHRISTINE, JEROME, EMON, JOEL AND SPECIALLY TO ONA!
TATUM

Is it worth the hassle?

(From page C1)

food to the indiscriminating crowd.

Emptying

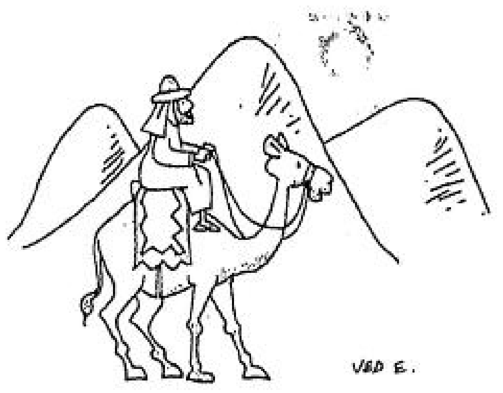
Stuff and stuffing seem to be quite the opposite of what is the true meaning of Christmas. Jesus "made himself nothing (emptied himself)... being made into human likeness" (Philippians 2:7). This was the purpose of his birth: to be like us. It was, if you will, a "demotion" to trod this earthly sod. From his heavenly mansions to the lowly manger stall, He came that we may have life.

If there is one thing missing in our frenzied Christmas fun, it is the lessons on humility and giving. To be humble about our achievements or stature in life is not easy in a society that puts so much importance in billing and ranks. Ostentatious display of wealth is really quite out of place. Why must we compete with one another over who puts up the better décor, hosts the better Christmas party or gives the better gifts? We should give without basing our choice of gift on our recipient's stature or position in life. Above all, we should give without expecting to receive.

My favorite Christmas story is "The Other Wise Man" by Henry van Dyke. Artaban sold all his possessions for sapphire, ruby and pearl—to carry as a tribute to the baby King Jesus. He missed meeting the other three wise men—Casphar, Melchior and Balthasar—because he tarried to help a dying old man. For 33 years Artaban searched for the intended recipient of his gifts, and along the way, his sapphire was sold for the camels and food he needed to traverse the desert on his own, the ruby was given to save a Jewish baby from death and the pearl was finally offered to ransom a girl from slavery.

As Artaban lay dying, regretfully moaning that he had failed his life quest, a voice came from heaven with this calm assurance: "In as much as you have done to the least of My brethren, you have done it to Me."

Christmas is about emptying, not about filling.



ILLUSTRATIONS: JED ESTRADA

E-mail the author at grace@koo.org

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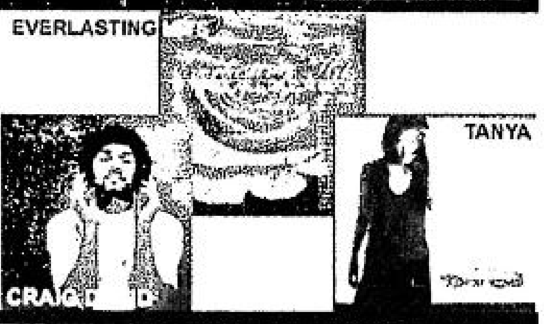
All entries for the day will be drawn
and winners will be notified via fax
or text within the day .



NAME:________________ AGE:______
ADDRESS:____________________
FAX:____________ PHONE:________
CELL:___________ EMAIL:_________
Tune in to Wave 89.1 for the Announcement of the Day's Winner

Today's prize courtesy of:
ALPHA records

HINT: Check out *Business section* on Thursday, December 27,
for Inquirer's My Wish Box.

Take Charge Doc!

Nicky S. Montoya, M.D.

Looking to learn more about your benefits under your MEDICard coverage? Do you want to be clear on the procedures, which allow you to avail of MEDICard's services? Get your information straight from MEDICard's Medical Director, DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA every Tuesday.

FAQs (frequently asked questions)

What are excess charges?

Excess charges, more appropriately called excess in room and board are charges payable to the hospital when a member is confined in a room rate higher that his actual coverage, but is within the same level or category. Example of which is when a member is entitled to a P 500/day room but stays in a P 600/day at the same room category. Excess charges are computed based on the difference of the room rates multiplied by the number of days confined.

Meet your MEDICard Team

Ophthalmologist. **Dr. Juan S. Lopez** is MEDICard's accredited specialist based in St. Luke's Medical Center. Dr. Lopez, famous for being the only Filipino member of the American Uveitis Society, earned his degree in Medicine from UP and his residency training from UP-PGH. He subspecializes in the treatment of Cataracts, Glaucoma and Uveitis where he received his training from the National Eye Institute, NIH, USA. Visit Dr. Lopez for your consultation needs. Drop by his clinic at the Medical Arts Bldg. of St. Luke's, every Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 1 to 4 PM.

Meet **Dr. Genevieve D. Tupas**, MEDICard's pediatric specialist based in San Pedro Hospital, Davao. Doc Genevieve is a graduate of Medicine from the Davao Medical School Foundation. She earned her residency training for her specialization from Davao Doctors Hospital and is currently affiliated with the Philippine Pediatric Society and the Davao Medical Society. Outside her clinical practice, she is also an instructor at the Davao Medical School Foundation, teaching Microbiology. For your healthcare needs, visit her at suite 211, Medical Arts Building of San Pedro Hospital from Mondays to Fridays, 10 AM to 12 noon.

Dr. Maria Celeste R. Casimiro is one of the most recent additions to the top brass roster of MEDICard medical service providers. She is based in Perpetual Help Medical Center and specializes in General Pediatrics. Doc Maria earned her degree in Medicine from the Far Eastern University and her residency training for her specialization from Perpetual Help Medical Center. For your consultation needs, visit her at room 610 every Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 11 AM to 12 noon and on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 9 to 10 AM.

We encourage all MEDICard members to voice out their concerns and issues at hand. BE HEARD AND BE READ. You can write DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA at 9/F Sagittarius Bldg. H.V. De la Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City or e-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com.

For individual or family membership inquiries, please call 818-2161 and look for Ms. Joy Mendiola. For group or corporate membership, please call 817-5136, 817-4985 or 817-5127 and look for a membership consultant.

TEXT MEDICard for your queries: 0917-7518365 (Globe) or 0919-2476240 (Smart). Please don't forget to include your complete name and landline number where MEDICard could reach you. *Log on to www.medicardphils.com*

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TO SANTA
STAYING FIT this HOLIDAY SEASON

ILLUSTRATION: JED DESTRADA

Fitness gifts are also for the unfit

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Aboitiz Juan

FITNESS gifts can be books, videos, apparel, gadgets, equipment, or even gym memberships. They are suitable not just for people who are already fitness enthusiasts but also for those who have not exercised in years. However, if you don't properly match the gift to the recipient, it could end up gathering cobwebs.

You could even accidentally hurt the feelings of those that do not exercise and set them back a few rungs in the motivation ladder. Here are some guidelines to make sure that your fitness gift is useful to your friend or loved one.

Don't base your choice of gift on what you like or can do but on what your recipient likes or can do. You might think that a taebo videotape is the perfect gift because it helped you get fit but if your recipient is out of shape, you might just "kill" him or her. A much simpler and less intense exercise video is more appropriate.

Just because you are a gym fanatic doesn't mean that your sister will automatically be one, too. She might be the shy type who breaks into a cold sweat at the thought of all those mirrors around her.

Safe and durable

If you are giving a fitness gadget, make sure it is safe and durable. Try it yourself to be sure. This is especially true of stuff sold on television infomercials. Just because the gadget looks fantastic on screen doesn't mean it will look or perform the same way in real life. Check to see if the gadget has any parts that will easily break or come off. If you have to sit or lie on it, is it stable? Can it carry your weight? Is there anyone to call if it needs fixing?

The issue of after-sales service is important if you are giving a gift of considerable value such as a treadmill. Does the company have a staff of technicians on call at any time? What is the reputation of the company regarding after-sales service? What's the use of buying an expensive piece of equipment when it won't be maintained properly or there is no one to fix it should anything go wrong?

Another thing to consider if you are giving a large piece of equipment like a treadmill or stationary bike is whether it will fit in the house of the recipient.

Does the recipient really need the gift? If your brother is a rock climber and you are not, do not try to buy him rock-climbing accessories because he may already have whatever you are buying; he may even have a better version. A safer bet would be to give him a gift certificate from his favorite rock climbing accessory shop.

Can he/she really use your gift? For example, your recipient might not be able to squeeze gym time into his/her busy schedule so gym membership will be useless. Giving three months worth of personal training sessions to be done at his/her convenience might be more practical.

If you are giving fitness apparel, think about whether your recipient will be comfortable and look good in it. To make sure, observe what kind of exercise clothes he/she already owns. If the recipients look smashing in them, buy the same kind of apparel.

Appropriate

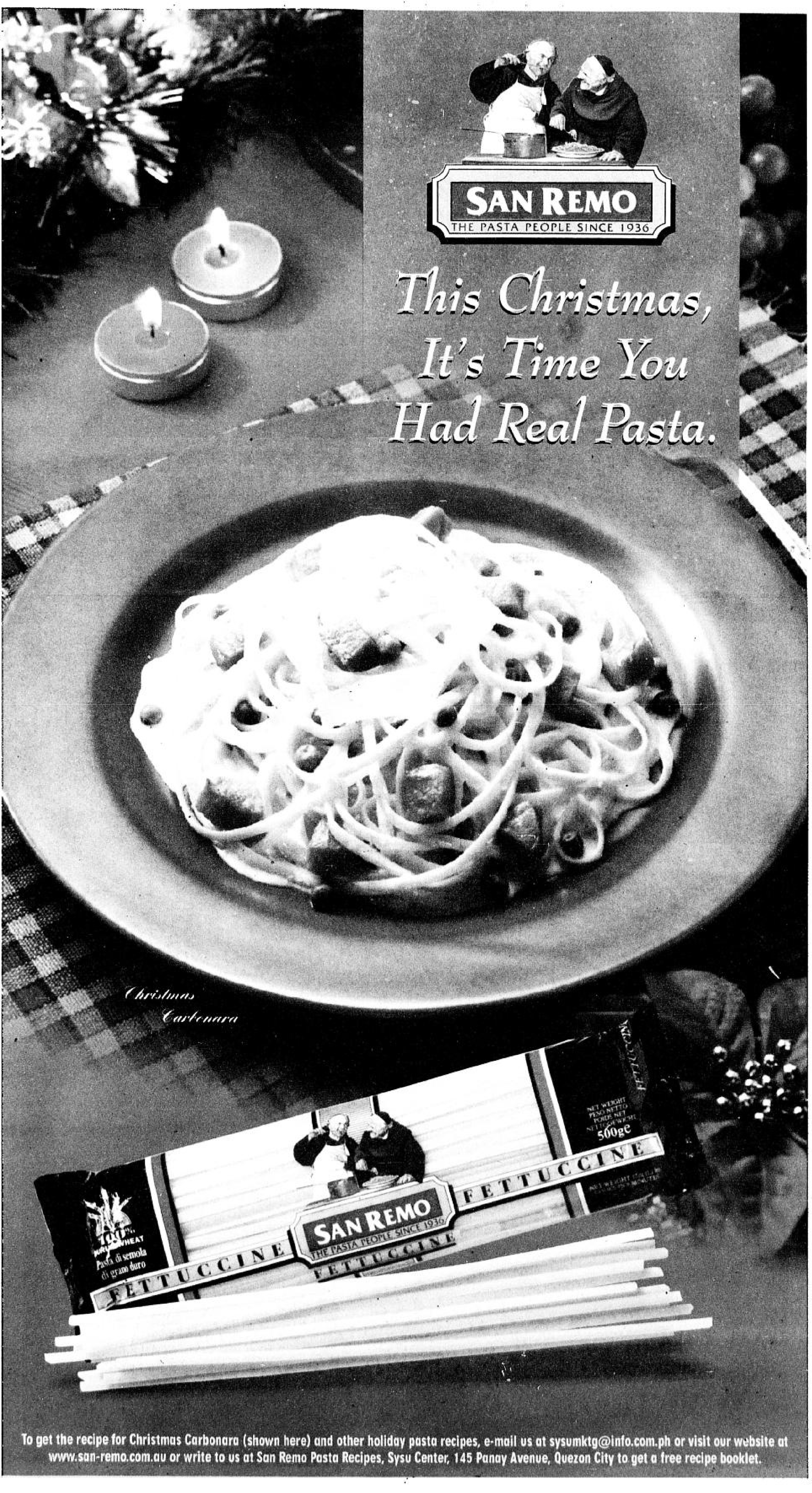
If you are giving athletic shoes, I hope you not only know the correct foot size of the recipient but also the appropriate kind of shoe to buy for his type of exercise or sport. To the uninitiated, it might seem like a marketing ploy of shoe manufacturers to make different kinds of shoes for different kinds of exercise or sports.

You might think, "A rubber shoe is a rubber shoe." But think again. The wrong type of shoe can actually cause injury. For example, running shoes are made for forward motion while tennis shoes are designed to slide laterally without causing unnecessary stress on the knees. It will be wiser to give a gift certificate from the most complete athletic shoe store nearby.

If your recipient does not exercise but has expressed a desire to get fit, giving the right fitness gift might just be the ticket he needs to get started on the road to fitness. Make sure to keep your gift simple and user-friendly. An exercise video for beginners is perfect for the recipient who wants to work out at home. Personal training sessions led by an encouraging instructor are also appropriate. A gym membership is motivating if your recipient lives nearby, has the time, and is a social animal. Make sure the gym staff is friendly and understanding so your recipient will not be intimidated. It will be even better if you can join him/her during the first couple of visits.

If you are giving a gift to someone reluctant to exercise and are hoping that the gift will change his/her lifestyle from couch potato to energizer bunny, be careful. Your gift may not be received the way you expect it to be. Women are especially sensitive to implications that they are out of shape if it comes from their husband or boyfriend. A warm supportive note stating how concerned you are about her health can do wonders for an insecure ego.

For questions or past articles and exercises, go to www.tinajuanfitness.com


SAN REMO
THE PASTA PEOPLE SINCE 1936
This Christmas, It's Time You Had Real Pasta.
Christmas Carbonara
SAN REMO
THE PASTA PEOPLE SINCE 1936
FETTUCCINE
Pasta di semola di grano duro
500g

To get the recipe for Christmas Carbonara (shown here) and other holiday pasta recipes, e-mail us at sysumktg@info.com.ph or visit our website at www.san-remo.com.au or write to us at San Remo Pasta Recipes, Sysu Center, 145 Panay Avenue, Quezon City to get a free recipe booklet.

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Bibs, favorite tita in Canada

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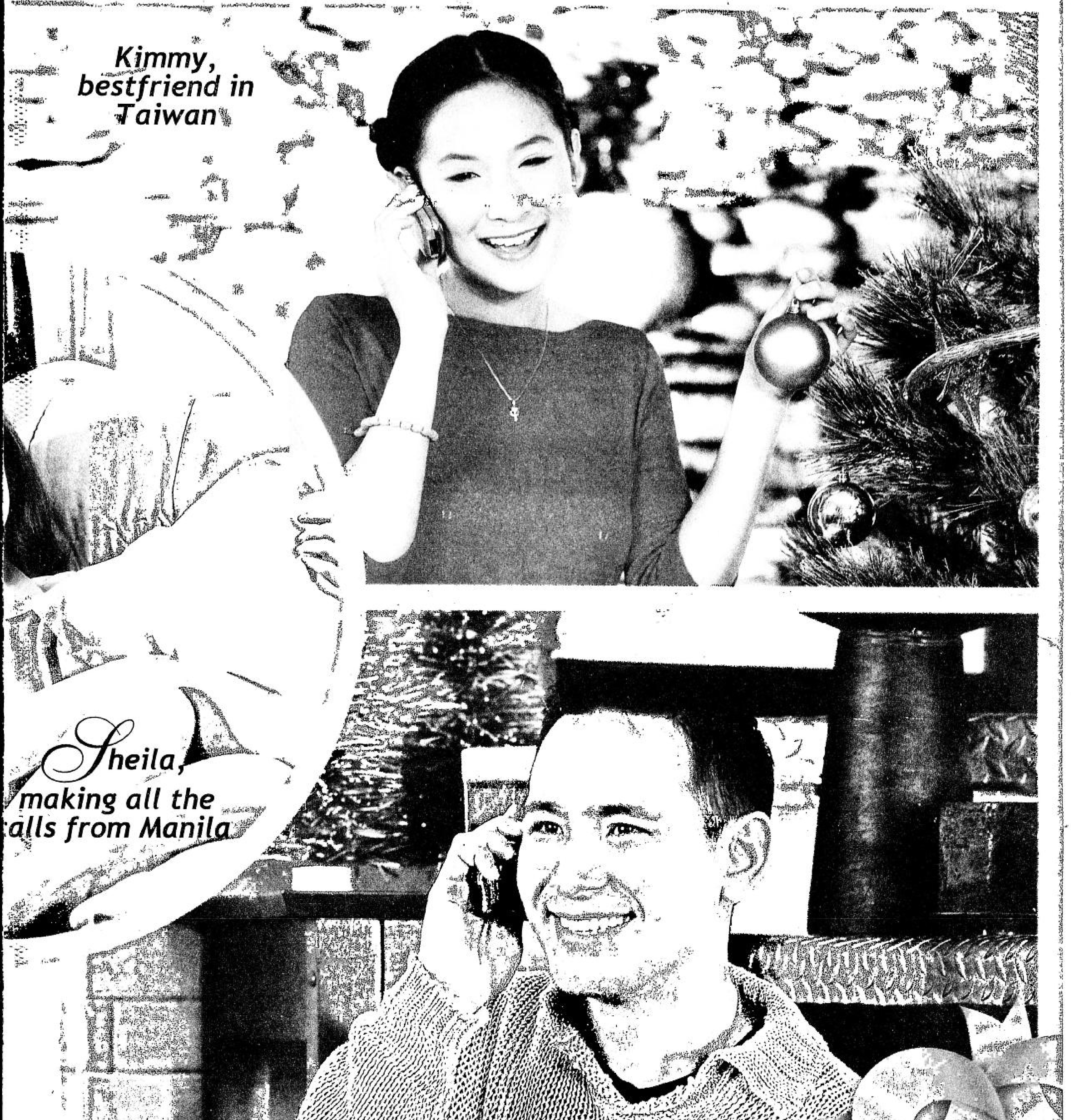
Kimmy, bestfriend in Taiwan
Sheila, making all the
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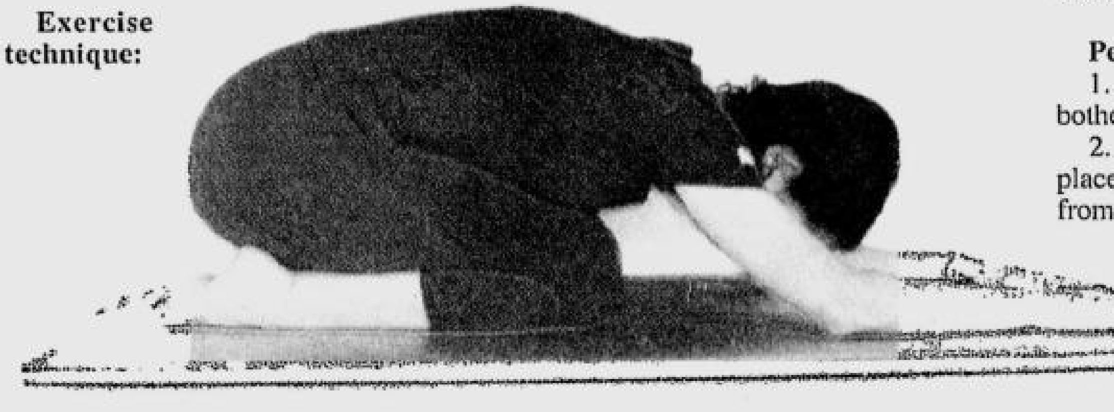
EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Folded side bend

STRETCHES the sides of the torso.

Equipment:
Exercise mat

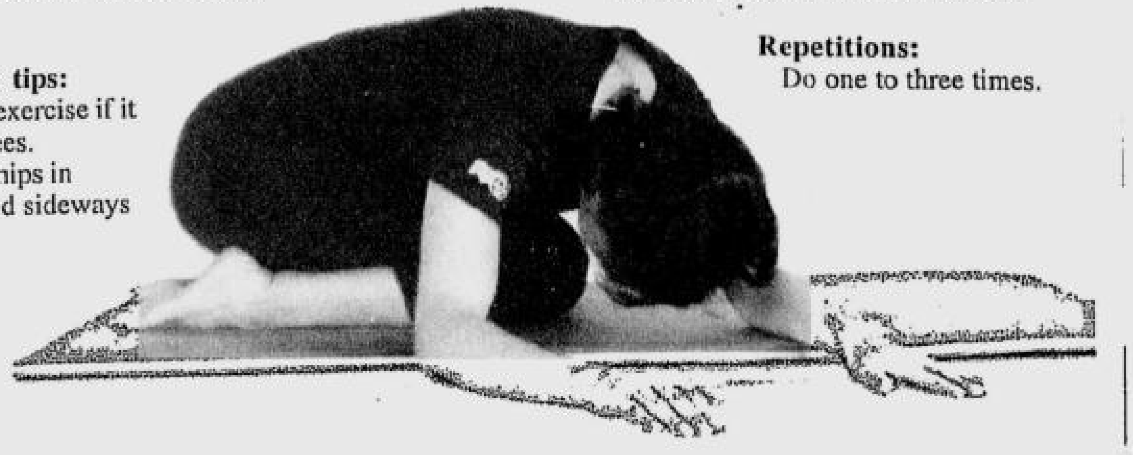
Exercise technique:



1. Sit on your heels with your arms in front of you.
2. Keeping your hips stationary, slowly bend from the waist to one side as you walk your fingers on the floor.
3. Hold the stretch for 15-30 seconds.
4. Walk your fingers back to the middle then repeat the stretch on the other side.

Performance tips:

1. Avoid this exercise if it bothers your knees.
2. Keep your hips in place as you bend sideways from the waist.
3. Try to look behind you as you hold the stretch.
4. Avoid holding your breath as you maintain the position of the stretch.



Repetitions:
Do one to three times.

DECEMBER 25, 2001

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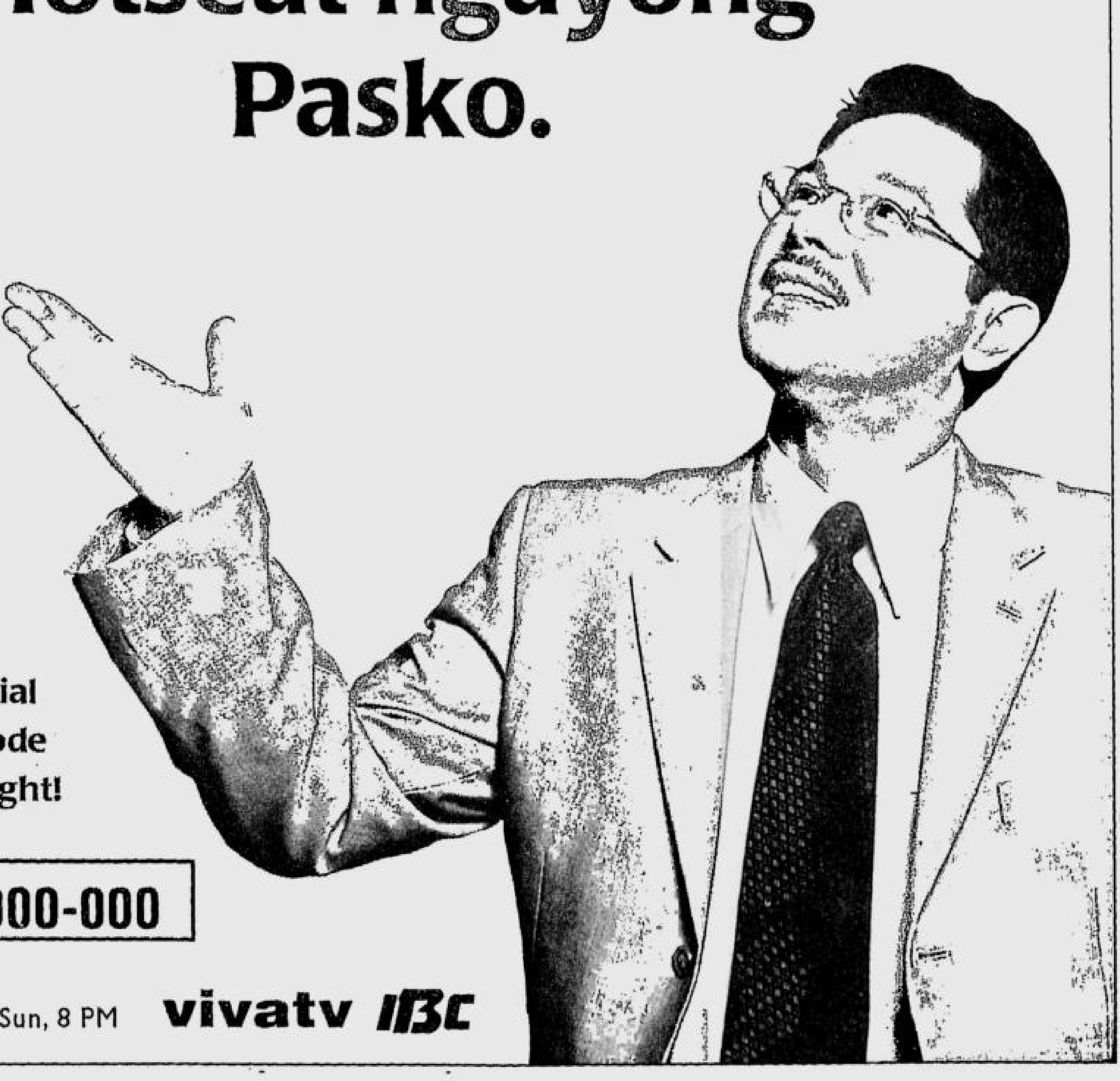

Scrolls reveal real origins of Christianity

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

IN ORDER to facilitate the study of voluminous materials that became known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, an international team of biblical scholars was created under Rev. Roland de Vaux, a French Catholic priest belonging to the Dominican Order.

Authors Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh (the same authors of the controversial "The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail") in their book "The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception" described Father de Vaux as personable outside, but "ruthless, narrow-minded, bigoted and fiercely vindictive" in reality. He was politically right wing and was strongly anti-Jewish. They felt he was "ill suited to preside over research on the Dead Sea Scrolls." He imposed his will on the international team, composed mostly of priests from America, France, Germany and Poland. One member of the team who was not a priest and was even an agnostic was John Allegro who was nominated by England.

Each member of the team was assigned specific texts for study, interpretation, translation and eventual publication. The Israelis tried to see the scrolls but De Vaux refused to grant them this much. And no Jew was admitted into the international team of scholars.

It was Allegro who observed the team was deliberately delaying publication of more substantial portions of the scrolls until a rigid consensus of interpretation was agreed among them. De Vaux wanted to make sure that no material would contradict the teachings of the established church. When Allegro protested about this, he was fired from the group.

The international team under De Vaux not only was high-handed in monopolizing the materials that came out of the Qumran caves, they were also intellectually dishonest. No one was allowed to challenge their rigid interpretation despite clear evidence to the contrary. The Biblical Archaeological Review in fact described De Vaux's team as "being governed largely by convention, tradition, collegiality and inertia." Allegro was the first member of the international team to publish all materials entrusted to him. None of the others ever did.

Treasures

He was also warned about the Copper Scroll, which described the existence of treasures and where they were hidden. De Vaux tried to have its publication delayed, because if it were proven to have existed in reality, "it could only be a treasure removed from the Temple in the wake of the AD 66 revolt. This would upset the safe dating and chronology which the international team had established for the entire corpus of scrolls." This was precisely the type of damning information that De Vaux was afraid of.

The international team under De Vaux tried to distance the church away from it. He wanted to show they were written much earlier than the Christian era, which was not true.

"Might these texts, issuing from so close to the source, and (unlike the New Testament) never having been edited or tampered with, shed some significant new light on the origins of Christianity, on the so-called 'early church' in Jerusalem and perhaps on Jesus himself? Might they contain something compromising, something that challenges, possibly even refutes, established religions?" ask the authors.

According to the official stand of the Catholic church, the Dead Sea Scrolls confirm rather than contradict the teachings of the church. Why then did they attempt to distance themselves from the Qumran texts?

De Vaux's team arrived at the following conclusions:

- The Qumran texts were seen as dating back to long before the Christian era.
- The Scrolls were regarded as the work of a single reclusive community, divorced from the epoch's main socio-political and religious currents.
- The Qumran community must have been destroyed during the general uprising in Judaea in AD 66-73, leaving all documents behind, hidden in caves.
- The beliefs of the Qumran community were presented to be entirely different from Christianity; and the Teacher of Righteousness, because he was not portrayed as divine, could not be equated with Jesus.
- Because John the Baptist was too close to the teachings of the Qumran community, it was argued that he wasn't really "Christian" in a true sense of the word, merely a precursor.

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